



**YOU CAN'T BE  
TOO CAREFUL**

*To Christopher Morley,  
who richly deserves it,  
this Book is Dedicated*

H. G. WELLS

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**A SAMPLE OF LIFE**

**1901-1951**

LONDON  
**SECKER & WARBURG**  
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## INTRODUCTION

### PLAIN COMMON SENSE

"WHAT *are* ideers?" said Mr Edward Albert Tewler.  
"What *good* are they? What *good* do they do you?"  
Young Tewler had no answer.

"You get these here books," said Mr Tewler senior.  
"You don't '*ave* to read 'em. It can't be good for your eyes,  
especially nowadays with all this light-saving and everything.  
And what do you get out of them?" He paused for his own  
contemptuous reply. . . . "Ideers!"

"I made good," Mr Tewler continued, trampling over the  
rebellious silence of his offspring. "And why? Because I  
took jolly good care to steer clear of all these Ideers. I made  
up my mind and I did. What the world wants of a man is  
Character—and you can't have much character left if you've  
muddled yourself up with Ideers. See! I ask you—'*ave* I  
made good?"

"You got the G.C.," said young Tewler. "We're all proud  
of you."

"Very well," said Mr Tewler senior conclusively.  
There was a pause. "All the same," said young Tewler.  
"Ah!" said his father.

"All the same," said young Tewler. "You got to keep up  
with the times. Things *do* change."

"You don't change human nature. There's such things as  
the Eternal Verities, 'Enery. Ever 'eard of 'em?"

"Yerss. I know. But all this stuff that's getting about. Like  
abolishing distance, stopping this air war, having a sort of  
federal world. If we don't *end* war, war will end us. All that."

"Claptrap," said his father. "Bawls."

"Well," said his offspring. "I was reading a book——"

"There you go!"

"Well, *he* said anyhow, he wasn't talking about Ideers.  
He was talking about facts. That's what he said. Just as you  
and me might be."

"Facts ! What are these precious *facts* of 'is ? In a book ! "

"Well, I'm telling you. He says that what with all this invention and discovery that's been going on life isn't the same as it used to be. We've got so that everybody's on our doorstep. We've got power, more than we ever 'ad, so as to be able to smash our world to bits. And 'e says we *are* smashing it to bits. And what he says is that whether it's hard, whether it goes against the grain, we can't go on in the old way. We got to exert ourselves. War, 'e says, will last for ever unless we get a lot of new things going. . . ."

"Now listen to me, 'Enery. Who is it 'as been putting all these Ideers into you ?—for Ideers they are, say what you like. Who is it, I ask ? Some one who's written a book ? Eh ? Some professor or journalist or something of that sort ? Some cleverish *clever* chap who isn't reely anybody at all. Somebody who'd just jump at the chance of getting a 'undred pounds for writing a book to depress people and not mind what happens. Well, let's come down to brass tacks. Put him on one side there. As it might be—so. Now here on the other 'and you've got real people, thousands of those who *know*. Here's our great Leader. Don't he know *anything*, 'Enery ? Who are you and your book-writer to criticise and sit in judgment on 'im ? Here's all these men of experience in the government, older than you are, wiser than you are, brought up to deal with just these particular things. Here's business men with great businesses, businesses you haven't the beginnings of a notion. Don't they know *anything* ? No ? You got ideers about India. Have you ever *bin* to India, 'Enery ? *They* 'ave. You've got notions about Japan. What do you know of Japan ? There they are, they got the best science, the very fullest information, the knowledge, they've learnt everything they could teach 'em at the universities, let alone the experience, and along comes some—some irresponsible scribbler with his ideers. . . . Unresponsible scribbler, I said, and I repeat it, irresponsible, with his twopenny-halfpenny *ideers*, arguing and suggesting. 'E knows this and 'e knows that. And everybody else is wrong. And off you fly ! "

"Well, the world *now* isn't so particularly satisfactory. . . .

Falling to pieces like. . . . Don't seem to settle down; does it? . . . ”

“ It's as right as it *can* be. What do you know of the difficulties they got to contend against? You *got* to trust 'em. Who are *you* to set yourself up? ”

“ All the same you can't help thinking——”

“ *Think*, yes—I admit that—you got to think, but think in the right way. Think like people round you think. Don't go rushing about like a dog with a wasp in his ear, with ideers that don't stand to reason. All this talk of a new world! Brave new world it would be! As the saying goes. Brave New World! Stay put where you are, boy. Do you want to be queer? Do you want to go about talking all this sort of thing just to be larfed at? Suppose—now suppose even there *was* something in all that stuff you get in books. There's 'undreds of books saying this that and the other thing. Who's to tell you which is right? I ask you. I do put it to you, 'Eney.”

Edward Albert Tewler's face was very grave and earnest and full of parental solicitude. His voice lost its faint flavour of querulous protest and became simply affectionate. “ You'll grow out of all this, 'Eney,” he said. “ It's a sort of measles of the mind. It rubs off. I had it. Not as bad as you, I admit, for I didn't run the same risks. I was never a great reader, thang God, and when I did read I stuck to safe books. Still I know how it goes. . . .

“ Frinstance I was brought up a bit Narrer. My mother, she was an angel if ever was, but she was Narrer. She *got* Narrer. She was too good to suspect them as got 'old of her. When it came to Total Immersion and all that and going to meeting Sunday after Sunday I *struck*. It wasn't that I lost my faith. No. It grew. It broadened out, my boy. Simple earnest Christianity, says I, and none of your Creeds and Ideers and complications. And that's what I am, a Simple Believing Christian in a Christian Land. The Lord died to save us, 'Eney, me and you, and there's no need to make a song about it. Or risk ketching your death of cold as they wanted me to do. Trust in God and honour the King. That's good enough for me. Yes.”

He paused. He smiled indulgently at his past.

"A little religious trouble I *did* 'ave even after that. I didn't take things for granted. . . . That's not my way. About the ark it was. Curious! I'll tell you. You see, I bin to the Zoo and suddenly I doubted about whether the ark could 'ave 'eld all them animals. I *did*, 'Enery. Being *clever*, that was. Being silly, my boy. It was the Devil put it into me to make a fool of me. Just as though God Ormightly couldn't pack anything into anything if 'E 'ad a mind to. Why, if he'd wanted to, He could've put all them animals into a nutshell—all of them. Leastways—a cokernut, say. Easy. . . .

"I saw the light, and so will you, 'Enery. All this Brave Noo World of theirs! Bunkum New World, says I. Gord larfs at it. Ferget it! . . . You'll grow out of it. At heart you're sound, my boy. You're the bulldog breed. At heart, when you're put to the test, you'll stand up to it as I stood up to it and come out right side up."

The young man looked mulish still, but he said no more.

The conversation hung fire for a moment.

Then Edward Albert Tewler resumed. "I'm glad to have this talk with you. Now you are going away. I've been a bit worried. Seeing you reading so much. There's other subjects I might talk to you about as father to son—but nowadays people seem to know such a lot. More than ever I did. We won't go into all that. No. . . . You may be away a long time, and it's not so easy to get about now as it used to be. I've never been much of a letter writer. . . .

"There's all this new sort of fever about. They say it's the water. Doctors aren't what they were. Sometimes when I get a fit of them night-stummick-aches of mine. Twisty they are. Make me 'oller. May be fancy, but one can't help thinking. You may come back 'ere one of these days, my boy, and not find me. No good pulling a long face about it.

"Anyhow I've said my say to you. You can't be too careful about those books. I'd burn the whole lot of them if I had my say, and I'm not the only one who thinks that. Except of course The Book. But those others. Right is right and wrong is wrong, and the simpler you are about that, the better. I'd

say that to you, 'Enery, if these was my last words to you. As maybe they are, almost. You'll soon be packing. . . .

" That old cemetery there at Highgate. High up and quiet. It's getting a bit crowded, but I guess they'll find a corner for me. Don't forget me, my boy, altogether. And don't let me be forgotten altogether. Tomb of the Unknown Citizen. Eh ? It isn't much I ask for. You needn't go to the expense of anything fulsome, my son. No. Just 'ave my name put there, Edward Albert Tewler, G.C., plain letters on a plain slab, and then just this"—his voice fell a little as though the beauty of his own phrase overcame him : " *Deeds not words.* Deeds not words. That's me, 'Enery. . . ."

So be it. You shall have him unadorned ; you shall have his plain unvarnished record. Nothing fulsome about it. This is a plain straight story of deeds and character—not character in general but the character you get in characters. What they did, what they said—there must, you know, be a sound track to a picture nowadays—but nothing like thought, no sort of consecutive thought. No dissertations, no arguments, above all no projects nor incitements nor propaganda, shall break the flow of our narrative ; no more of these damned " ideers " shall there be, than mice in the Small Cats' House. For anything of that sort this tale will leave you unruffled. We just take what comes to us.

Whether it will leave you with quite the biography that floated in the mind of Edward Albert Tewler, G.C., behind that epitaph, is another matter. He scrutinised himself as little as he scrutinised the world about him. Simple as his life had been, he had forgotten many things about it. We cannot recall his past ; we shall have to exhume it bit by bit.

One thing we may remark here, and that is that while he imagined he was doing things to the world, the reality was that the world was doing things to him. All he did from first to last was to react to it. " Deeds ! " said he, but did he ever do anything to the world about him ? It begot and bore him, it moulded and made him. He still lives, but it is the world around him that will decide when the time for his epitaph has come. This is the story of the Deeds and Sayings of

Edward Albert Tewler. From his point of view. But like those amusing pictures you find in books on Optics that will turn inside out as you look at them, it is equally the story of this whole universe of Edward Albert Tewler, and he is just the empty shape of a human being at the centre of it—its resultant, its creature.

But here we touch upon the profoundest riddle in this affair called life. It has echoed down the ages. Can Edward Albert, in view of the fact that he is a creature, have such a thing as free will? Could something, a response not merely passive but Satanic, enter into and possess that shape? The answer No has never quite convinced mankind. But this is a matter we must postpone until the end. Plain story we have to tell, but if, in spite of that resolution, plain story leads at last to an insoluble dualism, thither we must go. We may find ourselves free to balance or take sides.

Young Tewler shall not trouble you again. We dismiss him and his poor belated mental fermentation here and now. Don't ask me what became of him. It would only make you uncomfortable. Let me tell the plain tale of Edward Albert Tewler, G.C., who grew up in that great crowded sunset of human security between 1918 and 1938, before our wars were resumed in real earnest and men were changed to heroes in a night.



Here we have a picture of the modern novel. Look at it hard and alternately you see the vase, the social vessel, and nothing else, and then the social vessel vanishes and you see individuals and nothing more.

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BOOK THE FIRST  
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CHAPTER I

*Darling Bud*

IT took Mrs Richard Tewler, his mother, three and twenty hours to bring her only son into the world. He came shyly, not head-first but toe-first like a timid bather, and that sort of presentation always causes trouble. It is doubtful if his reluctant entry into this fierce universe would have occurred even then if it had not been for the extreme inadequacy of the knowledge of what are called preventatives that prevailed in the late Victorian period. People didn't want children then, except by heart's desire, but they got them nevertheless. One knew there was some sort of knowledge about it, but one couldn't be too careful whom one asked, and your doctor also in those days couldn't be too careful in misunderstanding your discreet hints and soundings. In those days England was far behind Polynesia in that matter. So there you were—and do what you could, you were liable to be caught.

Yet such is the heart of woman that Edward Albert Tewler had been scarcely four and twenty hours in this dangerous world before his mother loved him passionately. Neither she nor her husband had really desired him. And now he was the animating centre of their lives. Nature had played a trick upon them, caught them in a careless moment, and this miracle occurred.

If Mrs Tewler was overcome by love such as she had never known before, Mr Tewler was equally distended by pride. He was the useful repair man to Messrs Colebrook and Mahogany of North Lonsdale Street; a row of great windows

they had, in those days, full of the loveliest Chinese porcelain, Danish China, Venetian glass, old Wedgwood and Spode and Chelsea, and every sort of old and modern English ware ; and he came up in a green baize apron from somewhere below and considered the case carefully and gave his advice with discretion, and cemented invisibly and filled up gaps and, when necessary, riveted with the utmost skill. He was used to handling delicate, fragile things. But never in his life had he held anything so fragile and delicate as Edward Albert in the nascent stage.

And he had made this wonder ! He himself had made it. He held it in his arms, having promised on his honour not to drop it whatever he did, and he marvelled at its perfection.

It had hair, darkish hair of an extreme softness and fineness. There were no teeth, and its round mouth expressed an artless astonishment tinged with resentment, but its nose was finished minutely, nostrils and bridge and all, and it had hands, complete hands with little nails—every finger had a miniature nail on it, a perfect finger-nail. One, two, three, four, five fingers—only so delicate ! And toes also. Not one missing.

He pointed this out to his wife and she shared his pride. They doubted secretly if anyone else had ever produced so highly finished a product. If you had cared to do so, you could have told the little chap's fortune from those hands. They were not flat and featureless as you might have expected them to be ; already they had all the lines and creases known to palmistry. If no one had ever thought of " This little pig went to market ", I think Mrs Tewler would have invented something of the kind herself. She seemed unable to get over the fact that Edward Albert at the age of a week had as many fingers as his father. And later on, weeks later, when she was pretending to bite them off and gobble them up, she was rewarded by Edward Albert Tewler's first indisputable smile. He gurgled and he smiled.

The pride of Richard Tewler took many forms and masks according to his immediate surroundings. The " governor "

at Colebrook and Mahogany's, Jim Whittaker—he had married Jane Mahogany—had heard of the great event. "All's well with the Missus, Tewler?" he asked.

"All Sir Garnet, Sir," said Mr Richard Tewler. "They tell me he weighed nine pounds."

"That's a good start," said Mr Whittaker. "He'll fall away from that for a bit, but that won't be anything to worry about. The firm's been thinking of a silver mug. If there's no other godfathers in sight. Eh?"

"Such a nonner," said Mr Tewler, overwhelmed. . . .

Among the warehousemen and boys downstairs he assumed an air of modest assurance. They attempted badinage. "So you didn't get them twins you were counting on, Mr Tooler," said old Matterlock.

"Sample first," said Mr Tewler.

"You took your time getting started," said old Matterlock.

"Better than never starting at all, grandfather."

"That's all *you* know, my boy. Well, now you've found out how it's done, you be careful not to overdo it. What I mean is, don't make a 'abit of it."

"Somebody's got to keep up the breed," said Mr Tewler.

Mr Matterlock paused in his packing in order to demolish Mr Tewler by facial play. He featured an opinion of Mr Tewler's genes, a doubt of his health and beauty, an astonishment at his presumption. . . .

The proud father was invincible. "It ain't no good, Methuselah. You should see my kid."

Shackle, known as the Sniffer because of an objectionable but incurable habit, winked heavily at Matterlock, and wiped his muzzle with his sleeve. "What you ought to do, Tewler, you know, is to stick a notice of it in *The Times*, births, marriages, and deaths. No, no other paper, just *The Times*. 'Mrs Tewler of a son, no flowers by request.' Just that and the address. . . . Oh, I know what I'm talking about. I know a chap that did it. In the blasted old *Times*, and straight off from all over the country they began sending his missus samples of foods and drinks and medicines and stuff, for the kid and for 'er. Strengthenin' things and so on. I do

believe there was a bottle of special nourishing stout. Just think of that ! Pounds worth it came to."

For a moment Mr Tewler considered the possibility. Then he put it aside. "Mrs Whittaker might see it," he said. "The guv'nor might laugh it off but *she* wouldn't. She'd think it a liberty. . . ."

But as he made his way home to Camden Town that night, he found himself repeating in a sort of song, "Mrs Richard Tewler of a son. Mrs Richard Tewler of a son." He went over the details of the conversation and decided he had had much the better of old Matterlock. And of course it was quite right that one mustn't make a 'abit of it.

Still, somewhen there might have to be some one to wear out Edward Albert's clothes. Children grew so fast they didn't half wear their clothes out. He'd heard that said. It was almost as cheap to provide for two as for one—two or at the outside *three*. Not more. "Mrs Richard Tewler of a son." What would old Matterlock say to that ? One in the eye for him. It made him feel quite excited and philo-progenitive, and when he got home, Mrs Tewler thought he had never been more affectionate. "Not yet for a bit, Dickybird," she said.

She hadn't called him Dickybird for years. . . .

Later on that idea recurred to them, particularly after some transitory infection had jumped up the temperature of Master Edward Albert to 104·2 Fahrenheit. "To think of that little cot empty !" said Mrs Tewler. "What it would be."

But you cannot be too careful, and the matter had to be considered from every point of view. After all there was no hurry. No need to plunge. If not to-day, then next week or next month. The "governor" had been very nice about Edward Albert, but you never knew how things may be misinterpreted.

"Of course," said Mr Richard Tewler, "it *would* sort of look like rushing him for another silver mug. You have to think of that."

So in the end Edward Albert Tewler remained an only child. A little brother or sister was eliminated altogether

from his world of possibility by the unexpected death of his father when he was four. Mr Richard Tewler was crossing the road from Camden Town Tube Station and had just passed behind an omnibus, when he discovered another bearing down upon him from the opposite direction and close upon him. He might have dashed across in front of that, but suddenly he stopped dead. It would have been wiser to recoil. You cannot be too careful, and in that instant while he stood uncertain as to the best course to pursue, the big vehicle, which was swerving to pass behind him, skidded and killed him.

Fortunately he had insured his life so fully, taking out a new policy when Edward Albert was born, that on the whole his wife and son were left rather better off than they had ever been before his loss. He had belonged to a Burial Society, and the funeral had a black magnificence of the most satisfying sort. Messrs Colebrook and Mahogany put up a special ceremonial shutter (used normally for royal funerals) at each great window, six of the warehousemen, including Matterlock and Shackle the Sniffer, were given time off to attend the funeral, and Jim Whittaker, who knew that Tewler was irreplaceable and ought to have had a rise years ago, sent as big a wreath of virginal lilies as money could buy. The salesman in the shop also sent a wreath, and Mrs Tewler's uncle in Scotland astonished her by sending one too; a distinctly niggardly one, however, of everlasting flowers, with a curious second-hand look about it.

That intrigued her greatly. Why had he sent it? How he had come by it was beyond her imaginative range. He had acquired it some months before when he sold up one of his weekly tenants, an undertaker's widow. He had taken it because there was nothing else to take in its place. But he hated the sight of it once he had got it and hung it up on the living-room wall. He began to have fancies about it. He feared it might grace his own demise. The undertaker's widow, a dark highland woman with second sight, had cursed him. Simply for taking what was due to him she had cursed him. Maybe she had cursed this wreath on to him. Once he had

put it in the dustbin, but the dustman brought it back next day and wanted a whole bawbee, man, as a reward ! He put it here and he put it there, he had a fit of indigestion, and its air of waiting for him increased. The death of his nephew-in-law had come as a happy solution. He did not feel he was giving something away ; he was simply releasing himself from a menace. Handing it on whence it could never come back to roost.

But it seemed to Mrs Tewler that in his heart he must have been inspired by some glimmer of obligation towards his sole surviving next of kin. That gave her food for reverie, and later on she wrote him a long, long, grateful letter telling him of the wonderfulness of Edward Albert and of her own complete devotion to the little fellow ; hard struggle though it might be for her ; and so on. The old man saw no reason to waste a postage stamp on a reply.

At the funeral, which was wet and windy, Mrs Tewler wore a quite astonishing amount of crape for such a slender person. Long streamers waved about her and made sudden almost coquettish tentacular assaults upon the officiating clergy, patting their faces, even getting round their legs. Edward Albert himself wore a black Fauntleroy velvet suit with a lace collar. He had been put into knickerbockers for the first time. He had looked forward to his escape from the shame of girlish plaid frocks with unalloyed pleasure, sad though the occasion was. But the knickerbockers had been put together rather thoughtlessly, and they threatened to saw him asunder at every movement. Life suddenly became a long cold vista of bisection, so that he wept unaffectedly with disappointment and pain, to the edification of all beholders. His mother was profoundly touched by this evidence of precocious sensibility. She had feared he might stare about and ask impossible questions, and point.

" You are all I have left," she sobbed, constricting him and wetting him in a passionate embrace. " You are everything in the world to me. You must be my Dickybird and everything, now that He has gone."

She was disposed at first to go on wearing her weeds in-

definitely as dear Queen Victoria did, but afterwards someone suggested to her that this might cast a shadow upon Edward Albert's budding mind. So she compromised on black and white and mauve for such short years as still remained to her.

## CHAPTER 2

### *Mrs Humbelay Marvels*

**S**O it was Edward Albert Tewler began his earthly career, rather overweight and with a silver mug to his mouth, at a date so auspicious that when the World War of 1914-18 broke out he was four years too young to take an active part in it. Few of us could imagine a more fortunate beginning. Yet he missed a father's guidance, and in 1914 his mother also passed over to that better world where insurance is unnecessary, all our dear lost Dickybirds await our coming, and as for the weary, the weary are at rest.

I have told my tale but ill if I have failed to convey that if this most natural and excellent of mothers had any fault at all in her, it was a certain disposition to excessive solicitude, and, associated with that and integral to that, an element of fear. I will not discuss whether these qualities were innate or the infection of her generation, for that would be a breach of the undertaking given in the Preface. She was not afraid herself, but her protective motherliness extended to everyone and everything that appertained to her. And it came to a focus upon young Albert Edward, who was always central to her thoughts and dreams and plans and speeches. She was not you must understand an unhappy woman. She lived a life of intensely concentrated anxious happiness. There was always some new menace to excite her.

Her Treasure had to be shielded from every harm. He had to be watched over and trained to recoil from every form of danger. His shielding was her sole topic of conversation. She welcomed every new threat to her darling ; she sought ideas for fresh precautions. She would ask the most

churlish to advise her, and remained poised expectant while they did their best to keep their replies within the still very narrow limits of early Edwardian good manners. Their real ideas about what ought to be done to Edward Albert they muttered when she was out of earshot. But one old curmudgeon was driven to say : " *Let him be run over. Let him. I implore you. He won't do it twice. That'll teach him if nothing else will.*"

Of course he could not know how dear Richard had been killed. Still it was heartless. . . .

She made her solicitude the justification for an unrelenting pursuit of lecturers, teachers, doctors, and the minor clergy. " No harm shall come near him," she said. " Only tell me." Earnest preachers hid in vestries, peeping slyly at her until she went away, and hygienic experts, after giving the most edifying lectures and passing lightly over the more difficult parts, escaped through the most undignified and unhygienic exits to avoid this importunate widow's demand for precisions. She subscribed to numerous periodicals wherein " Aunt Jane " or " Dorothy Wisdom " advised and answered readers' questions, when a coupon was enclosed. She asked for all the information that was fit to print, and got it—time after time.

But there are many dangers and riddles that centre upon the upbringing of a solitary male child that cannot be solved in public print, and here Mrs Tewler was much beholden to intimate, shame-faced but extremely interesting talks with various people endowed with a rich store of obsessions and inaccurate but moving information, who would talk to her in undertones, with circumlocutions, metaphors and gestures and an obvious mutuality of relief. There was, for example, Mrs Humbelay, acquired at the Baptist Social Afternoons, who would come to tea, or entertain Mrs Tewler in her own modest but extremely over-furnished apartment. She said very little at the Socials, but she listened with an appreciative tranquillity, and she was very helpful, bringing little delicacies and making buttered toast.

These Socials were becoming an increasingly important

factor in Mrs Tewler's life. Now there was no Dickybird to whom she could tell her troubles in the evening she turned more definitely to the little close Baptist community. Behind the blue door they were Strict and Particular, and she agreed. She could talk about her devotion to her Darling and about her ill-health with a reasonable reciprocity. And in particular there was this Mrs Humbelay.

Mrs Humbelay had been and still was an extremely fine woman, and everything was fine and large about her, her things particularly, except her rooms, which were small, and her voice, which was infinitesimal, a whisper at the best of times, and an inaudible wheeze, in which facial expression had to come to its assistance. She had not very much facial expression beyond a certain astonishment at the things she was saying.

She had left her village school in a state of innocent simplicity to become under-housemaid to Miss Pooter-Bayton, who was then living under the protection and in the household of the scandalous Duke of Dawes, the sixth Duke. There was some pretence that Miss Pooter-Bayton had a husband somewhere and that her relations to the Duke were Platonic. But when the under-housemaid asked what Platonic was, she got only mirthful and perplexing replies. She gave way to wonder, and open-eyed and breathless wonder became her permanent attitude to life. Fate had decided that she should see the entirely disreputable side of what used to be called the *Fin de Siècle*. She was a young, simple, rather pretty, acquiescent creature, and all sorts of things happened to her. She was never greatly shocked. She wept at nothing ; she laughed at nothing. Fate pitched her about and she marvelled. "The *things* they do !" she said.

The *things* they did to her !

It wasn't right, she knew, but apparently there was no right, really. Everybody told lies about what they did, making things out to be worse or better as the mood took them. That gave her a sense of standards. The Duke's house steward, who had fallen in love with her wide-eyed credulity, suddenly married her. It seemed rather unnecessary after

all that had happened to her, but he knew what he was up to. "We are going to run a private hotel down in Cornwall for the Duke and his sort," he said, "and fine times we're going to have there," and so she acquired that houseful of large furniture of which the remnant still clung to her. Except the pictures. She got rid of all that stuff. Fine times they had for a bit, and then he turned against her. There was a great *Fin de Siècle* scandal in London and he seemed to change. He said one day that she was getting too fat for endurance and that a cow could make love better than she did. "I do my best," she said. "If only you'd tell me what you want me to do. . . ."

Then suddenly the *Fin de Siècle* world fled abroad in a great flutter like starlings. "You run this place, my dear, until things blow over and I come back, and put by all the money for me," he said, and he left her, still marvelling but bankrupt, in a great shady hotel that had figured in the case so conspicuously that nobody now would come near it. She extricated herself as well as she could, and came to London; the works of art she sold to furtive dealers and private collectors; and, having always had a subdued craving for conventional standards and a virtuous life, she joined the congregation of the smaller Baptist Church up Camden Hill, the Particular Baptist Church, the one with the blue doorway. She disliked smoking and detested alcohol, and the Baptist atmosphere suited her admirably. She tried to thin herself by avoiding almost every sort of food except cakes and buttered toast at tea-time, and little snacks in between meals. Yet every day she grew larger of body and shorter of breath, and her look of faint perplexity increased. As you may understand, she felt a great need to talk to someone about the fantastic whirl of improper revelations amidst which she had been spinning all her life. And you will realise what a godsend she was to Mrs Tewler, and what a godsend Mrs Tewler was to her.

Yet if only she had not had that trick of letting her voice fade out with her lips still active but inaudible, and staring at you with those innocent, earnest, inquiring blue eyes of

hers, Mrs Tewler's ideas might have been more explicit. "Sometimes I can't make head or tail of it," Mrs. Tewler would complain, but really it was the tail she lost. She wanted to know, for Dearest One's sake, what were all those dreadful things that lay in wait for the unguarded young, underneath the sunken tail and the raised eyebrows. She wanted particulars and she got this sort of thing.

"Sometimes I think it's the good ones really make the bad ones. For after all, you see. . . .

"There isn't so *very* much that they can do with themselves. . . .

"Well, my dear, it isn't as though we was octopuses, is it? all legs and arms and things. . . .

"His Grace had a sort of joking way of saying, 'All the world's a stage, my girl'. . . ."

Mrs Tewler went to the Public Library afterwards and with the librarian's assistance looked that up in Bartlett's *Familiar Quotations*:

"All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players.  
They have their exits and their entrances ;  
And one man in his time plays many parts,  
His acts being seven ages" . . .

Nothing in that. It was a mystery.

"All they want to do is something queer and awful. Would it matter—whether it was upside down or round about, if the good people didn't make such a fuss about it? I could never find anything so wonderful. . . .

"But good people say, 'This is a sin', and that is terrible. . . ."

"What is—exactly?"

"Doing all these things. And so they make laws against them and all that, and it seems to give them dignity, so to speak, as though they mattered. Why should they matter? For instance, is there really any great harm. . . ."

Lost again!

"Most people like breaking laws, just to show they aren't to be put upon. If they'd been left alone, they'd just have

done this or that and forgotten about it. Everybody does things somewhere—— . . . ”

“ But they *are* sins,” cried Mrs Tewler. “ And I think it’s all terrible. And *wicked!* ”

“ Maybe you’re right. They call it Original Sin. It seems the most *unoriginal* sort of sin possible to me. Why if for example . . . ”

“ But someone must *teach* them these dreadful things ! ”

“ They get together. Or they get alone. And there’s nothing else to distract them. And before you know where you are you find . . . ”

“ But if one keeps one’s little boy away from nasty little boys and girls, and watches over his reading and never leaves him alone until he’s sound asleep—— ”

“ There’s dreams,” said the wise woman. “ There’s fancies that come from nowhere at all. Very likely you’ve forgotten your own early dreams and fancies. Most people do. Or they wouldn’t make such a fuss. I haven’t. Why, long before I went into service, I used to sleep with the curate and my elder brother and a boy I once saw bathing—— ”

“ My dear Mrs Humbelby ! ”

“ Only in dreams. Have you forgotten all that about yourself? Well ”—down went the voice—“ and I used to imagine myself . . . ” Mrs Tewler could get nothing of it.

“ Oh ! Oh ! ” she cried. “ My Boy isn’t like that. My Boy can’t be like that. He just sleeps like a little harmless lamb. . . . ”

“ Maybe he’s different. Still I’m only telling you what I’ve come across in life. I can’t make out what it’s all about. . . . It’s a great relief to talk to an understanding woman like yourself. I’ve thought of putting all my troubles plainly and simply to Mr Burlap. What I’ve been through. What I’ve seen. But you see he doesn’t know anything of what I’ve been, really. He thinks I’m just a comfortable respectable widow. I wouldn’t like him to turn against me. . . . ”

“ I don’t think you’d be wise to tell him.”

“ Nor me. Still, what’s the answer to it all? We’ve got all these desires and impulses, we’re told, so as to have children.

So you may say. But they don't *lead* to children, Mrs Tewler. They lead right away from them. Why, I ask you, my dear, should Nature dispose a man—well now, for example, to . . .”

## CHAPTER 3

### *Mr Myame Deplores Sin*

MRS TEWLER brooded profoundly on these conversations. Enough came across to convince her of the diabolical wickedness that would presently be weaving its snares about the unsuspecting feet of the Most Precious Child in the world. She tried Mr Burlap, the pastor of the little chapel. He received her in his Sanctum. “It's a very difficult thing,” she said, “for a mother to know what to do about the—I hardly know how to put it—well, the sexual education of a solitary fatherless child.”

“H'rump,” said Mr Burlap. He leant back in his chair and looked as thoughtful as he could, but his ears and nostrils had suddenly gone very red, and his eyes, magnified by his spectacles, were uncomfortable and defensive.

“Yee-es,” he said. “It is a difficult problem.”

“It is a difficult problem.”

“It is certainly, a very difficult problem.”

“That's what I feel.”

So far they were in perfect agreement.

“Whether he ought to be *told*,” she resumed after a pause.

“Whether he ought to be *warned*. Books perhaps. A talk to a doctor.”

“Oom,” said Mr Burlap, filling the Sanctum with his reverberation.

“Exactly,” she said, and waited.

“You see, my dear Mrs Tewler, that this problem so to speak varies with the circumstances of the case. We are not all made alike. What may be wise in one case may be quite unsuitable for another case.”

“Yes?” she said.

"And of course, Vice Versa."

"I see that," she said.

"He reads?"

"Quite often."

"There is a little book called I believe *The Loves of the Flowers*. Mr Burlap's face was suffused with an honourable blush. "He could have no more helpful introduction to the—to the great mystery."

"I will give it to him."

"And then perhaps a little judicious talk."

"Judicious talk."

"When the opportunity arises."

"I must pray for that."

All that was very clear and helpful. But it seemed to leave something still to be said. There was something even a little superficial about it all. "Nowadays," she said, "there is so much evil about."

"These are evil times, Mrs Tewler. 'The world is very evil; the times are growing late.' This has never been so true as it is to-day. Guard him. Evil communications corrupt good manners. Keep him close to you. Yes."

He seemed to be wanting to convey that the matter was practically settled.

"I have taught him his letters and so on, but presently he will have to go to school. There he may learn—all sorts of things."

"Oom," said Mr Burlap again, and then seemed to be struck by an idea.

'I hear such dreadful things of schools,' she said.

Mr Burlap roused himself from his idea. "Boarding schools?"

"Yes, boarding schools."

"Boarding schools," said Mr Burlap, "are, without exception, Sinks of Iniquity. Especially the Preparatory Schools and the so-called Public Schools. I know. I know. There are things—I cannot speak of them."

"That is exactly what I came to talk to you about," said Mrs Tewler.

"Well," said the worthy pastor, "H'rump. Here we have in our own little congregation just the one man. . . . You have never noted? Mr Myame. That slender, reserved man with a big head, large black side-whiskers and a bass voice. You must at least have noticed his voice. You could hardly fail to do that. He is a man of great spiritual power, a Boanerges, a son of Thunder. He has a small, a very select, private day school. He is most particular whom he takes. His wife is, I fear, consumptive; a very sweet and tender woman. They have no children of their own; it is a great sorrow to them; but their school is in the best sense of the word their family. They study the characters of their little charges. They are never weary of discussing them. There and with your home influence, I cannot imagine any harm coming near to your little fellow. . . ."

So Mrs Tewler went to Mr Myame.

There was something very reassuring in the grave earnestness of Mr Myame's large grey eyes and of the black hair that streamed sporadically from every part of his visage. And instead of sitting far off and defensive at a desk, he came and stood right over her and studied her very earnestly as he talked down to her. After a little preliminary skirmishing she came to the point. "To be frank," said she, with eyes downcast, "I am troubled by problems—— My poor little Hopeful. . . . Without a father. . . . The onset of sex. One cannot be too careful."

"No," said Mr Myame, in a voice that enveloped her. "That is the greatest scandal of my profession. Eager only for examinational results and what are called games. Cram and cricket. The carelessless, the indifference, to purity, to true manliness. . . ."

"I hear," said she, and paused. "I know so little about these things. But I have been told. . . . Things have come to my knowledge. Very dreadful things. . . ."

"Such as——?" he helped her.

Bit by bit they led each other into the thickets of this absorbing subject.

"No one warns them," said Mr Myame. "No one tells

them of the dangers. . . . Their own little schoolfellows make themselves the very agents of the devil."

"Yes," she said, and looked up, stirred by the vibrant passion in his voice.

A gleam of fanaticism shone in Mr Myame's eye.

"We must speak plainly," he said. "We must avoid all self-deception."

He shirked no particulars. It was a most edifying conversation. His discreet undertones were like the rumble of a train in a distant tunnel. Under any other circumstances it would, she felt, have been painful and very indelicate of her to pursue this knowledge, but for her Sweet Boy she felt no sacrifice was too great. So she did not merely pursue it. She hunted it into its most recondite corners. Mr Myame, who had never been honoured by the confidences of Mrs Humbelay, was astonished by the range of Mrs Tewler's knowledge. She must surely know it by inspiration. . . .

"Another Parent?" asked his wife after he had let Mrs Tewler out.

"At the full rates," he said, with a certain gladness.

"You look—excited," she remarked.

"Fanny, I have been talking to the purest and holiest Mother I have ever known. Who could touch pitch and not be defiled. I have learnt much. It has been a great spiritual experience and I hope I may do my duty by her Little One." He paused.

"I have asked her to come to our inner circle meeting next Friday. She breaks bread with us but she has not yet undergone Baptism. She has hesitated but she is very desirous. Like you she has very delicate health. She does not want to risk an illness that might separate her from her son. Later perhaps. . . ."

A phase of great spiritual contentment opened in Mrs Tewler's life. Impelled only by love and her sense of duty, she found she had come into a circle of intense and sustained mutual appreciation, a sort of inner chapel into which she was extremely careful not to introduce Mrs Humbelay. Mrs Humbelay could be very helpful and generous on the social

side, but she was, one had to admit, lacking in real spirituality, suited to be at most a sort of lay sister to the chapel. And also subconsciously Mrs Tewler did not want to spoil Mrs Humbelay for herself. . . . It was a case of oil and water. . . .

Everyone in that inner group was a Beloved Spirit, a Saintly Figure, a Noble and Outstanding Soul with an Inner Light shining through. Her Baptism continued to be deferred, but she seemed to anticipate its beneficent influence. She broke bread. She invented and exchanged experiences. Wrapped in that confident anticipation of an eternity of Glory which the Strict and Particular Baptists entertained, her face almost luminous with that happy inner light, she would thread her way through the countless multitudes of the damned who thronged the streets of Camden Town. And she led her One Darling by the hand.

And safe in her keeping Edward Albert would extend his tongue or snoot at the Children of Perdition passing him on their way to Judgment, or tug back to look at things in the shop windows. Sometimes there would be a bit of a struggle when the bill boards outside the newly opened cinema caught his eye. Moreover at that tender age he felt a curious desire to pull little girls by the hair, that twice became irresistible. . . .

But when he was taxed with that he denied it stoutly. There were scenes in the street. Fierce accusations and disgraceful retorts. He said the little girls were Wicked Little Fibs. His mother would not believe it of him, and he could scarcely believe it of himself.

## CHAPTER 4

### *Animalism of Animals*

MRS TEWLER would let no nurse girl intervene between herself and her "Precious". During his baby days, she herself, proud and vigilant, wheeled him out

in his little perambulator every day up Camden Hill or into Regent's Park. When Edward Albert showed signs of friendliness towards dogs, and reached out at them, saying "Bow-wow. Bow-wow," she intervened. "Never *touch* a strange dog," she said. "They bite. They bite and give you hydrophobia and you go mad and run about biting people. And then *they* go mad too."

Something in the eye of the small boy suggested that this was not an altogether unattractive idea. "And you scream when you see water and you die in *awful* agony," she said.

That gleam of hope faded.

Cats too Edward Albert was trained to shun. "They have pins in their toes," and sometimes these can be very poisonous pins. Lots of people have caught things from a cat's scratches. They bring measles into the house. They don't love you even when they purr. And then she heard a terrible story that had to be repeated at once to the cherished darling, of a cat, being petted, purring in the lap of its little mistress, and it watched her eyes, it kept on watching her eyes, and suddenly it sprang at them with its claws out. . . .

After that Edward Albert developed an antipathy for cats, and declared he could not endure them in the same room with him. He was cat-allergic, as people say nowadays, in their bright, inexact way. But at times cats got near him unobserved—which wasn't in accordance with that assertion. Horses too he feared, because he realised they could be equally dangerous to human life at either end. Sheep he was inclined to bully and run after, until one dreadful day in Regent's Park an old ram suddenly turned on him and stamped and stood his ground. Whereupon he fled screaming to his mother, who, pale but determined, intervened, confronted the danger and disposed of it very rapidly by opening and shutting her grey and white parasol. That left only the new grey squirrels which had recently come over from America for him to be reasonably bold about. He gave them nuts sometimes, but when they became over-familiar and wanted to run up his legs and over him, he struck and kicked at them. When a passer-by remonstrated with his mother, she defended him.

" You never know what they'll give you," she said. " They're thick with fleas, you see, and he's a delicate, sensitive child."

Such were the reactions Edward Albert acquired to the indigenous fauna of London. His knowledge of the graver extremities to which Nature was allowed to go after the Fall of Man was derived chiefly from books. He invented a marvellous electric gun for his private comfort which always killed and never required re-loading, and this he always kept close at hand when he travelled in his reveries across the silver seas. Gorillas and bears lurked in the darker corners of the house and under his bed, and no sort of emergency would induce him to quit that shelter once he had been tucked up in it. Four guardian angels, he knew, watched about him, but none of them had the pluck or the intelligence to rout about underneath the bed. If he woke up at night they weren't there. He would listen to things creeping about and scrutinise dim ambiguous shapes until it became unbearable, and then he would scream for his mother.

" *Was* there a nasty bear ? " she would say, rejoicing in her protectiveness. She never lit up the room and showed him the emptiness of his fears. So he learnt to hate animals in every shape and form. They were his enemies, and when he went to the Zoo he made derisive faces and put out his tongue at all the most dangerous animals behind the bars. But the mandrill went one better.

After the mandrill Mrs Tewler and her son went on for a time in silence.

Some things are unspeakable.

They both felt that animals ought never to have been allowed, none of them, and that coming to the Zoo was simply encouraging them to be the animals they were.

" Would you like a nice ride on the elephant, darling ? " said Mrs Tewler, breaking that embarrassed silence, " or look at the dear little fish in the aquarium ? "

At first Edward Albert was inclined to have a ride on the elephant. But he asked to have a good look at it first. He thought perhaps he might sit by the keeper man and be allowed to beat it about the head, but when he saw the

elephant taking programmes and newspapers out of people's hands and eating them, and when it handed up pennies to its keeper in the most intimate way, and when it suddenly put a moist mendicant trunk in front of him, he decided he would prefer to go home. So he and his mother went home.

## CHAPTER 5

### *All-Seeing Eye*

THE home in which Edward Albert's mind expanded for the nine crucial years that followed his father's death was a furnished first floor. He had the little back room. There was fortunately no bathroom, so up to the day of her death he performed his week-end top to toe modestly in a sitz bath into which a large can of hot water had been poured, in his mother's room, under her watchful eye. The front room was the living-room and sitting-room, and it had a balcony from which the little fellow could watch the proceedings of his wilder fellow-creatures at large in the street below. He went for walks with his mother to and fro from school and on small commissions. He skirted dogs widely and never answered if anyone accosted him. And one day when a small low-class boy punched him heavily in the back he went his way as though nothing had happened. But afterwards he meditated horrible reprisals ! If ever he met that kid again ! . . .

This peaceful and secluded home had been furnished in order to be let. Mrs Tewler had never possessed any things of her own, though she and her husband had often discussed setting up a place of their own on the hire purchase system, but as we have seen they were people of slow decisions. No human eye had ever seen the fundamental upholstery of the various chairs and sofa except by peeping. They were enveloped in covers changed semi-annually from a faded chintz to a weary cretonne. Folding-doors separated the apartment from the principal bedroom. There was a side-board and a bookcase and various pictures, a fine steel

engraving of a stag at bay, a view of Jerusalem, a picture of Queen Victoria and the Prince Consort with a slaughtered deer, gillies, etc., balancing the stag, and a large and sensational rendering of the Writing on the Wall. A round table, an overmantel and a large coal scuttle, refilled at six-pence a time, completed the apartment.

Mrs Tewler had added many souvenirs, knicknacks, photographs framed and unframed, and objects of art and fancy to all this, making it very personal and homelike. She had thought of having in a piano on the hire purchase system, but, as she could not play it, she had decided this might be regarded as ostentation.

There was indeed no music whatever in Master Edward Albert's early life, except the harmonium and sustained hymn singing of the chapel and a passing barrel organ. The gramophone, the pianola, the radio, had still to break the grave serenity of British home life, silent still except for an occasional cough or sniff, the rustle of a turning page, the crepitition of the fire or a peculiar snoring of the gas jets, whose light was supplemented by a shaded paraffin lamp of noble proportions set upon a woollen mat in the midst of the central table. It had a glass receiver and when one touched it one acquired a faint but persistent odour of paraffin. On Sundays when one changed into clean linen came a whiff of lavender. The roast chestnut men, the baked potato men and suchlike "cries of London" stood out brightly against this olfactory background.

On the mantel was a card which Mrs Tewler had discovered in a shop together with others proclaiming "Furnished Apartments" and "Teas". It bore two words which were destined many years later to become a national slogan; "Safety First". By what gleam of foresight this card had been inspired, or what particular danger it advertised in mitigation of damages, I cannot imagine. But there it was, and it found a prompt response in the mind of Mrs Richard Tewler.

By the standards of our present violent times, this atmosphere might have been considered under-stimulating. In Edward Albert's own little room however there was a more definite

appeal to his religious susceptibilities. There was a coloured picture of his Redeemer surrounded by a great number of children, with the inscription, "Suffer little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven." For some reason Edward Albert could not identify himself with any of these roseate innocents. Severally and collectively he hated them. The other religious subjects that adorned his apartment neither offended nor appealed to him. He just avoided looking at them. But one or two of the illuminated texts bothered him. "Thou God seest me," in particular. He did not like that. He liked it less and less as he grew to boy's estate.

It wasn't fair, he felt. Was there nothing He couldn't see? Could He see through bedclothes for example? And whatever you chanced to be doing? There was something indelicate about this relentless stare.

It was Edward Albert's first encounter with Doubt.

Never once did the faintest gleam of affection for the divinity, Father, Son or Holy Ghost, enter into his soul. He believed that this Watcher and Punisher brooded insanely over his world and that he had sent his Only Son just to put his helpless creatures still more in the wrong. That was what Edward Albert felt and believed. I make no comment; I am merely recording facts. Since God was Almighty and Relentless, you had to propitiate Him—safety first—and not think a thought of protest even in the darkness of your black little heart. No putting out your tongue at *Him*. No."

(And a recording angel writing it all down!)

Edward Albert doubted but he never denied. Like most other Believers he managed to mitigate. He had an inspiration.

"He can see you," he argued. "But they can't be looking at *everybody* and writing down about *everybody* all the time."

That wasn't an idea to tell other people. It was an idea to keep very much to oneself. If you talked about it too much you might suddenly attract His attention.

Our young man put up that idea like a modest private parasol between himself and the Sun of Righteousness.

And insensibly the skies clouded over so that presently he did not seem to need his parasol any more. God ceased to be a consuming fire.

We are not arguing here. I am simply recording indisputable facts: I am telling the story of one little boy, who grew up to be a hero as you shall hear, and I cannot help it if his story becomes for a moment the story of countless millions of other little souls. This is how Christians temper their faith and how they are able to behave as they do behave in spite of its stupendous imperatives.

## CHAPTER 6

### *Advertised to Death*

EDWARD ALBERT'S mother died when he was thirteen. The elderly doctor who attended her last illness certified that she died of "bronchitis". It was a prevalent custom in those days to certify for bronchitis and probe no deeper into the matter. Doctors are a mentally overworked race, and in this matter of diagnosis they have their own epidemic and epidemic disorders. As a matter of fact she died, as a great number of people died in those days, of a surfeit of patent medicine advertisements.

Because in that golden age of freedom, security and opportunity in which our story opens, people enjoyed, among other enviable liberties, great liberty of salesmanship, and a number of enterprising business men, realising that a vast majority of their fellow-creatures suffered from internal pains and discomforts due to the consumption of well-advertised but unwholesome foods, to the unhygienic quality of their housing and employment, and to the survival at a low level of existence of multitudes of individuals who would have been far better dead, devoted themselves to their exploitation. This great uneasy majority constituted from the point of view of salesmanship a mass of consumers to be catered for with a view to

profit, and to that these entrepreneurs vying with one another, set themselves with great energy.

The medical profession in those days worked almost entirely for private gain and protected its privileges upon trade union principles ; it combined very low standards of education and qualification, with a creditable insistence upon the honour and privilege of the individual practitioner. Doctors were disposed to stand by one another under criticism, in a post mortem or anything of that sort, when definitely unprofessional conduct did not appear. Their methods of diagnosis were old-fashioned ; good diagnosis was a matter of aptitude rather than training, and generally they preferred to diagnose a definite disease and bring it out fairly and squarely and cure it or kill, than tackle all those various and ill-defined states of malaise that would not yield to such forthright treatment. They waved these aside as fancifulness. Consequently there was a considerable irritation between doctors and patients ; the doctor and his antiquated and incomprehensible prescriptions, his authoritative manners and his failure to enlist the intelligence of his patient such as it was, in the process of recovery, was distrusted even more than he deserved ; and the way lay wide open for salesmanship, to flout his claim to be the sole dealer in the health of the community.

So in spite of him there had grown up a steadily expanding business of pills, aperients, tonics, sustaining foods, cures for every sort of twinge and pain, stimulants, purifiers. These new salesmen began perhaps crudely, but they steadily improved in their methods and reached an ever-widening clientele. Their advertisements became a more and more important item in newspaper finance. From early appeals to people who already had pains, their more and more competent methods instructed people how, when and where to have pains. The medical profession attempted warnings, published analyses of popular remedies, explained their ineffectiveness and their harmfulness, and so forth, but this now gigantic system of human enterprise had achieved the control of all the media of news distribution, and the doctors were quite unable to get their protests over to the public at

large. Their pamphlets vanished from the bookstalls and got no "Press". They said things to their patients, but they found their patients incredulous in the face of an enormous volume of skilled assertion.

This book is no picture of the Edwardian-Georgian age, but these simple circumstances have to be stated here if the reader, in this new and vivid world of adventure and disaster in which we live to-day, is to understand the way in which Mrs Richard Tewler did herself to death.

The newspapers began to look for Mrs Tewler in real earnest in the benign reign of King Edward the Seventh. Then it was that "Constant Reader", in anticipation of Professor Crew, changed sex. In the old days when Richard was alive, Mrs Tewler hardly ever glanced at the paper. She took no interest in Politics or what men had considered to be news, and it was only when she discovered the existence of "Aunt Jane" and "Dorothy Wisdom" through such publications as the *Mothers' Vade-mecum*, that she spread out her reading to the new daily Press, so different from the grey uneventful expanses of the old.

She began to read first about bargains and cosmetics, because, although no decent Christian woman paints her face or does anything of that sort, it might be possible to learn something about one's appearance that did not involve that. Naturally her attention flowed over to the more intimate discussions beside them.

There was "that tired feeling". She had it. But she did not realise what it meant for her until the salesmen told her. It meant the onset of anaemia and then pernicious anaemia. For that a certain blood mixture was admirable. She stocked that and forgot to note its effect because next she was being made conscious of a whole series of neuralgic pains.

They flitted about, pursued by nervous panaceas, and got to her head. There always had been times when she had had headaches, but never the splitting headaches she realised after she had seen a picture of a mighty fist hammering nails into a head. It was liver pills she needed for that, and they were added to her medical menu.

Effervescent salts promised and failed to restore her to a giddy cheerfulness, because now she lay awake all night suffering from night starvation. That too could be met. Uric acid also got loose in her system and clamoured for further remedies. Her washstand carried an ever-increasing array of bottles, capsules, pills and powders.

Still the salesmen pursued her. It dawned upon her that she had sinus trouble and incipient arthritis, cancer in several places and osteomyelitis. She did all that could be done to anticipate and defeat these evils. She did not tell her doctor about the cancer, because the salesman assured her that would bring upon her the crowning horror of an operation. She could not face that. No operation. No !

She felt under-nourished, and, instead of taking wholesome food, she consumed a cup of feeble tea with a meaty flavour, that the salesmen assured her with vivid illustrations, had the strength of a whole ox in it. Never a newspaper dared to denounce this murderous lie. She swallowed the stuff, felt satisfied for half an hour or so, and then faded again. She picked herself up with a viciously drugged red wine because its salesmen assured her that all its profits went to the promotion of Christian Missions throughout the world. Its advertisements were endorsed with signatures of venal divines of every persuasion. All religious organisations, as Shaw has been reminding us in his *Major Barbara* film, need funds, and all organisations that need funds can be bought A.M.D.G., and so ultimately the Lord's work was done on the craving stomach and suffering frame of Mrs Tewler.

Poor Mother Eve, from first to last thou and all thy seed have been the victims of the Salesman ! For so it was we lost our paradise, when the first salesman sold thee his fruit and lingerie. He proffered his free sample, he guaranteed satisfaction. And until selling shall cease from the earth—— . . .

(Censor.)

She stood in her bedroom wearily taking her doses, hoping she had not forgotten anything, and listening to her ever more sinister internal noises. Then she would feel herself all over for growths and tumours. Often she felt quite hard ones.

She told everybody she could all about her sufferings, and Mr Myame called her "Our Dear Martyred Sister". And he told her, all this will be returned to you a thousandfold, which possibly was not exactly what he intended to say. Some of the other members of the inner circle were fairly good at affliction, but none could produce anything to equal hers either in depth or variety. Mrs Humbelby one day described an artificial hernia to her, and remarked that we are fearfully and wonderfully made, and Mrs Tewler said, "If it comes to that, my dear, I think I would rather die. . . ."

But hernia she was mercifully spared. It did not come to that. The salesmen could make nothing out of artificial hernias.

She clung so desperately to life; because where would her Only One be without her? And it is to be noted that very little of this remedial struggle of hers extended to him. But that was because she was able to observe her own terrible symptoms, while, after one single experience with some tonic drops, nothing would induce Edward Albert to admit he had any symptoms at all. His demonstration of his extreme vitality on a later occasion included an attempt to stand on his head which was only partially successful and led to the breaking of a plate.

"You cannot be too careful," she coughed from her chair—she was developing her pleurisy that day. "Doing that might lead to a rush of blood to the head and apoplexy. Promise me, whatever happens, you will never attempt that again."

She had a spasm of pain. "He's not much use, darling, but do you know I feel so queer that I think I ought to see Dr Gabbidash. If you'll go round for him. He might at least give me a morphia injection."

The good doctor did, and in the course of a week assisted her departure from this vale of trial and error in a soundly professional manner. For she really had pleurisy. She had brought herself down to a vulnerability that gave any old germs a fair chance with her. Their blitzkrieg was swift and successful.

During her final phase of medicated malaise Mrs Tewler made several wills, couched for the most part in a richly pious phraseology. The valid instrument left a number of trifling souvenirs to various friends, including a marked Bible and a silver-framed photograph for her dear friend Mrs Humbelay, and named Mr Myame as sole executor, trustee and guardian for her son until the dear child was twenty-one, exhorting the young man to trust and obey his guardian as a Father and more than a Father, a Guide and a Wise Dear Friend.

Edward Albert listened to these dispositions without an excessive display of emotion.

He looked at the lawyer and he looked at Mr Myame. He sat on the edge of his chair meagre and wary.

"I suppose it *'ad* to be," he said with resignation.

He sucked his teeth for a moment.

"Who was that Mr Whittaker who sent that great wreath?" he asked. "What sort of relation is he to me?"

Neither of them could tell him.

Then he reflected. "I didn't know Mother was nearly so bad as she was. No. . . . I suppose it *'ad* to be. . . . That was—it was"—gulp—"a lovely wreath anyhow. She would have liked. . . ."

And suddenly his white little face crumpled up and he was weeping.

"You have lost the Noblest and the very best of Mothers," said Mr Myame. "That Sainted Brave Woman. . . ."

Edward Albert had acquired a habit of never listening to what Mr Myame might be saying. He wiped his miserable sniffing face with the back of a dirty little hand. He was only beginning to realise what all this meant to him. Day or night she would never be there any more. Never. He wouldn't go home to her presently and tell her things to his credit, true or false according to circumstances, and bask in the love she bore him. She wouldn't be there. She wasn't there. She'd *gone*.

BOOK THE SECOND  
THE ADOLESCENCE OF  
EDWARD ALBERT TEWLER

CHAPTER I

*The Hidden Hand*

AT thirteen our young Englishman was pale and undersized. Like his mother he was a trifle exophthalmic. His features were delicate and undistinguished and his bearing circumspect. Some more vigorous element in his heredity, however, struggled against the effects of his early restriction ; he grew irregularly and inelegantly to average proportions, and his profile became firmer as he got into his later teens. There was a repressed drive in him throughout his life—as we shall see. He did not actually cease growing until he was nearly thirty.

For some reason he never learnt either to whistle properly or throw hard. His mother may have checked early attempts at whistling, and so he developed a sort of hiss-whistle with his upper teeth well over the lower. And as for throwing, he was ambidextrous, which in fact meant that he was not dexterous with either hand. He lobbed with his left hand and learnt belatedly to throw with his right. He could never throw very high or very far, and that was just as well, because an undetected astigmatism made his direction uncertain. In those days there was no examination of school children's eyes ; you had to put up with the eyes God had given you. So that he also jumped uncertainly and to the best of his ability avoided jumping.

His life had been so completely shielded from mental or physical harm that until he went to Mr Myame's school for young gentlemen at the age of eleven and a half, he had no child associates whatever. But there he found schoolfellows

and some of them were even permitted to invite him home to tea. He always had to assure his mother they were nice little boys before she allowed him to go. They had families, sisters and cousins, and his circle increased.

He became a boarder instead of a day boy in Mr Myame's Commercial Academy when his mother died, and for a time he shared the bleak "Joseph Hart" dormitory, the larger one, with six other boys, which the ever-solicitous Mr Myame in list slippers might prowl through at any hour of the night.

And since Edward Albert had no home to go to, his first summer holidays were spent among the alarming circumstances of animal life at large and unashamed, in a Wiltshire farm belonging to Mr Myame's brother-in-law. There were fields in which great cows grazed and stared at you, chewing slowly as they meditated your death, and there was not the slightest protection for the passer-by. There were horses, and once at sundown three of them started galumphing round a field most terrifyingly. Edward Albert dreamt about it afterwards. There were unmuzzled dogs. There was a lot of poultry with no sense of decency whatever. Awful! And you couldn't help looking and you sort of knew and you sort of didn't know. And you didn't want anyone to see you were looking, either. There were ducks, but they weren't so bad. There were geese that would come at you very alarmingly if you went near them, but then you needn't go near them, and otherwise they were perfectly respectable. They disapproved, it seemed, of everybody. And there was Master Horace Budd, aged ten, very sturdy and rosy, who was coming back to London to be a boarder, too, next quarter. "I promised Mother not to hit you," said Master Horry, "and I won't. But if you want a fight——"

"I don't want a fight," said Edward Albert. "I don't fight."

"Not just a punching match?"

"No. I don't like fighting."

"I promised Mother. Why won't you come and ride on the old horse like I do?"

"I don't want to."

"I didn't promise anything about not setting Boxer on to you."

"If you do anything to me," said Edward Albert, "anything I don't like, I'll *kill* you. I'll just kill you. I know a way. See?"

This gave Horry pause. "Nobody's talking of killing people," he said.

"I *am*," said Edward Albert.

"Oh, come and feed the rabbits," said Horry, and then after a pause for reflection. "You got a knife?"

Edward Albert whistled after his fashion for a moment or so. "I don't do it that way," he said. "I got a way of my own."

He had a way of his own in his imagination. For behind his unobtrusive façade Edward Albert led a life of lurid reverie. He liked to be the still man who never spoke, the Secret Killer, the Avenger, the Hand of Doom. And he and Bert Bloxham, with the big fair cranium, and Nuts MacBryde of the warts, belonged to a secret society, the Hidden Hand of Camden Town. It had passwords and secret signs, and you were admitted by an Ordeal. You had to stand with your finger in a gas-jet for five seconds. It hurt no end, you smarted for days afterwards, and you could smell your flesh burning. But let it be recorded that Edward Albert stood up to the test. He licked his finger first, but Bert Bloxham, who hadn't thought of that, made him wipe it dry.

The headquarters of the Hidden Hand of Camden Town were in the room over the disused stable behind Bert Bloxham's aunt's house. You went up to it by an almost vertical ladder. She was an extremely indifferent aunt, a heavy, silent woman in chapel, and with no trace of family resemblance to Bertie, and she never on any occasion ventured up that ladder. So the Hidden Hand had an admirable library of "bloods" stowed away there, and three black masks and three dark lanterns which stank of Brunswick Black when they were lit, an air-gun and a knuckle-duster, and there it planned

a reign of terror that reached from King's Cross to Primrose Hill. Little did the people of that region know how terrorised they were.

On dark winter evenings the Hidden Hand would prowl sometimes for as long as an hour, with their dark lanterns nestling hotly inside their jackets and their masks on, actually on, except when a policeman was spotted. Then "Nix and we dissemble."

In this fashion these desperadoes just raised hell. They swore and used forbidden words—Nuts' every other word was an oath—he thought nothing of saying "Godomgithy"—and they had a pack of real cards, "the Devil's picture-books", and gambled with them at *Beat your Neighbour out of doors* and *Grab* and suchlike skin games for almost unlimited stakes. Afterwards Nuts learnt *Nap* from a cousin. For some obscure reason they always played for dollars and generally wore their masks while doing so. They swore and spat. They did not play for cash, they gave chits and kept a record, and at one time Nuts owed Edward Albert over five thousand dollars and Bert half as much again. That was a pretty load to carry for boys still under thirteen. Since it was quite within the range of possibilities that they would be smelt over when they went home, they did not smoke. Nuts had tried chewing tobacco, using a partially-smoked cigarette he had picked up, but his reaction was so prompt and so extremely unpleasant for everyone concerned that the experiment was not repeated.

Such was the hidden life that flowed darkly beneath the fair surface of Edward Albert's meek discretion.

His mother, remarking how often he went to tea with Bert Bloxham or the MacBrydes—though indeed he never went near the MacBrydes—suggested a return of hospitality. For a time he was disposed to resist this. He did not know what his mother would think of Nuts' vocabulary if perchance his tongue was loosened, nor did he know what his fellow-toughs of the Hidden Hand might think of his home life. She pressed the proposal. "They're regular chaps," he said. All the more reason for knowing them. He stipu-

lated for fruit cake and ice cream. "Of course, darling," said his mother.

"They may *seem* a bit rough," he said.

"All boys are rough," she said flatteringly.

She did them well. They both came looking morbidly clean, and for a while everyone was too busy feeding for any other sort of behaviour. They made noises, but good wholesome noises, and chiefly when they drank. "Thank you, Mam," they said to all Mrs Tewler's proposals, and for a time they hardly said anything else. Sighs of satisfaction marked the conclusion of the feast.

"I wish *I* had your appetites," said Mrs Tewler.

And then came the crucial moment when Mrs Tewler said, "And now what shall we do?" But she knew just what they were going to do. And believe it or not, these devils incarnate, these gamblers who thought nothing of staking a hundred dollars on a single throw, these wicked toughs who clothed themselves with cursing as with a garment, became as little children again. The Hidden Hand played Snakes and Ladders and Race Game and said "Thank you for our luvlay tea, Mam," just as though they really were the quite nice little boys Edward Albert had said they were.

Bert belched slightly as he said it, but Mother had not seemed to be aware of that.

## CHAPTER 2

### *The Cricket Match*

THE number of boys in Mr Myame's school varied between nineteen and twenty-four, and yet Edward Albert got into the first eleven before he had been there two years, and played in his last year in the annual match against Bolter's College. Before that match he had not liked cricket very much, but after it he was as thorough a cricket fan as every young Englishman ought to be.

Mr Myame's school played cricket in Regent's Park in the summer, but it did not play any game in the winter, because football made the boys muddy and parents objected. But Mr Myame was convinced that good sound open-air exercise was conducive to morality. He hated to think of boys "loafing about" and the menu of his prospectus included "compulsory games". Boys should go tired to bed. It was possible to obtain caps, flannels, shoes and equipment generally from firms of school outfitters at advantageous wholesale prices, and even the most unworldly parents were gratified by the spectacle of their offspring apparently playing cricket in a socially acceptable manner. The underlying seriousness of the school was apparent in the choice of black and white for the school colours.

Contemplating this enlargement of his enterprise, Mr Myame, being aware of a certain athletic insufficiency in himself, added a "Games Master" to the staff, Mr Plipp, an excellent young married elementary teacher who was free on Wednesday afternoons and who was also prepared to regard scout marches and tracking on Primrose Hill as a compulsory game for the winter months.

Nothing remained to perfect this games side of the school except to arrange a few matches, and here Mr Myame was so fortunate as to fall in with the Principal of Bolter's College who was watching his boys "practise", while he wrestled with a similar problem. Bolter's College was a small genteel private establishment in Highbury which catered mainly for the offspring of remote or hypothetical parents in the tropics; it had a Union Jack on its blazer pockets, its caps were red, white and blue, and its style of play did not seem to be hopelessly above the school standard. So an annual, no, *the* annual cricket match was arranged, and had been going on for several years before Edward Albert joined the school. Generally Bolter's won by producing lean, lithe and dusky "old boys" or alleged new additions to the staff who never reappeared. Nothing had been said about "old boys". It seemed unkind to exclude them. Myame's was a younger and smaller establishment without the

wanted Edward Albert to come up nearer and on the off side. Was there to be no longstop? Up there and closer was more dangerous. In the slips a ball can knock you over and stun you before you know where you are. Why not pretend to be sick or go home? And be jawed at after by Mr Myame? Instead of tea?

Edward Albert trotted up to his appointed place.

The ritual of the game began. Middle? No—a little to the left. That's right. Play!

The old boy batting at the wicket snicked the ball neatly for a boundary. It passed within a foot of Edward Albert. Six.

"Look alive there, Tewler," said Mr Plipp, not too pleasantly.

Edward Albert neglected the game for a moment or so while he exchanged offensive grimaces with Nuts. Then a ball hit him.

It hit him so hard that for a moment he thought he saw two balls, one at his feet and one running away from him. The College batsmen were running. "Can you, Sir?" cried the daemonic old boy. "Come on, Sir?" They were stealing a second run. "Now then, Tewler!" cried Mr Myame. "Oh! Look alive."

Edward Albert scrabbled at his feet and secured a ball, and with all his soul and strength threw it at the wicket keeper. It missed him by about a yard and a half, and knocked the bails off the wicket. The bat of the long darkie slid over the creases, five seconds too late. Still Edward Albert did not realise his good fortune.

"Owzatsir?" Mr Myame was saying, and the Umpire answered "Out."

"Well thrown in, Tewler!" said Mr Plipp. "Perfect! Exactly what I wanted."

Edward Albert grew an inch or so and forgot that he probably had a bump at the back of his head. "I fort it best to throw straight at the wicket, Sir," he said.

"Exactly. Exactly."

"You did quite right," Mr Myame confirmed. "We shall

make a cricketer of you yet, Tewler. Smartest thing you've done for a long time. . . ."

The game was held up for a moment by cries of "Thank you, Sir. Thank you." There was a ball about from an adjacent game, and this was the established way of demanding its return. There it was, quite close to the Umpire's foot. (Then there *had* been a second ball !) The Old Boy picked it up absent-mindedly and sent it soaring home, before retiring to the College outs to brood over his premature dismissal. He had counted on a long and glorious afternoon of free, loose hitting. He was replaced by a small boy who succumbed to the third of what were known as Mr Plipp's "googlies", a curious slow overarm delivery with great hypnotic power over the young.

"Owe-ver."

And then came a terrific event. Mr Plipp told Edward Albert to bowl. He told him to bowl. He held the ball in his hand, looked at it, started, seemed to be struck by some strange idea, and then ordered Edward Albert to bowl.

Mr Plipp was a cricket strategist of the most elaborate type, but for him to tell Edward Albert to take the next over strained the faith of his following to near the breaking point. He instructed his pupil carefully in undertones. "This big chap," he said, "is a slogger and used to good ordinary bowling. Well, give him some of those incalculable grounders of yours. See? Lob a bit if you like. Don't mind if he swipes you out of bounds once or twice. I know what I'm doing."

And, after looking at it again for another reflective moment, he handed the ball to Edward Albert. "Bowl to his leg side," said Mr Plipp, "and vary the pace. I want him to hit."

Fear and pride mingled in Edward Albert's heart as he handled the ball. As he felt for its creases, he had a curious feeling of unfamiliarity. This ball was showing signs of wear, he thought. . . . But now to bowl. If he aimed about a yard or so to the right he might get the wicket. It often happened like that. He would do that. To begin with he would try one of his short sneakers. It pitched short and rolled slowly towards the wicket. The giant, who seemed now ten feet

high and broad in proportion, awaited its coming with some hesitation. It was not the sort of ball he was accustomed to deal with. He wasn't prepared for anything so feeble. He simply blocked the ball.

"Well bowled, Tewler," cried Nuts derisively. Jealous? Yes, but next time. . . .

Our hero resolved to vary his attack. He would send in a few very simple grounders to the giant's leg. One fast and then a slow twister? Down there. Out of his reach, perhaps. The fast one first. Edward Albert put all his strength into it and alas! up went the ball in the air. Up, up, it went—a perfect Yorker. He'd slog it to—heaven! But the giant, expecting another lob, had been advancing to smite. This strange ball, high in the air, made him hesitate, and, hesitating, he was lost. He remembered what he had to do just half a second too late. He stepped across the pitch and hit hard to leg. Swish! Click! The leg bail dropped. Flop, went the ball into Mr Myame's gloves. To Goliath's astonishment, to Edward Albert's astonishment, to everyone's astonishment, the ball had got the leg stump. "Howzat, Umpire?" came Mr Myame's astonished voice as he held up the ball.

"Out!" came the verdict.

"Oh, GorORMIGHTY!" cried Nuts out loud and unreproved. Butter-fingers had clean bowled Goliath. *Clean bowled him, Sir!*

The rest of the innings was inglorious. Two of the College kids made two runs, and there was a wide, and, strangely enough, Edward Albert was not asked to bowl again. The back of the defence was broken. Mr Plipp resumed his celebrated googlies and Mr Myame bowled three overs, and the last man was out.

The College had been disposed of for twenty-four, eighteen actual runs, a wide, three byes and two no-balls by Mr Myame overrunning the crease. The black and whites went in at last to a possible victory. This time they just might do it. Mr Plipp displayed an unwonted disposition to slog, scored sixteen, and was caught out by Goliath at long on.

Mr Myame compiled a cautious five and was clean bowled by the lean and long Old Boy, who also gave four byes from his bowling. Edward Albert did not actually score a run, but the end of the innings left him in so that he "carried his bat" triumphantly "not out". Nothing remained but the cheering. The school had won by six wickets, and Edward Albert was the hero of the day.

"A fine match," said the Principal, shaking hands with Mr Myame.

Bert wanted to throw catches to some of the other chaps, but he found Mr Plipp had pocketed the ball. "No, you don't want them to see you miss your catches," said Mr Plipp, with unusual snappiness.

The College retired in good order, discussing the glorious uncertainties of the game, and the victorious school fell into column with the annual match tea (currant bread and jam, day-boys invited), enlivening its outlook.

As they left the park a young man in flannels came hurrying after Mr Myame. "Excuse me," he said. "I'm afraid you've been playing most of the time with the wrong ball. He produced a nice new red match ball as he spoke, and handed it to the Headmaster.

"Hm," said Mr Myame gravely. "That certainly has a resemblance to our ball, but—"

He looked across at the departing College. It was far away and out of earshot. He turned a perplexed and heavy face to Mr Plipp. "Odd," he said. Mr Plipp took the ball and immediately put it into his pocket, producing another with the greatest promptitude. "That is yours," he said.

"That is ours," said the young man. "It's a Lillywhite. Yours is a Duke. I hope this won't upset your game in any way. We didn't notice at first."

"I hit two boundaries," said Mr Plipp. "The change may have occurred then. Just at the end of the game."

"I think it occurred rather earlier," said the young man. "I really don't know of any rule of the M.C.C. on the matter."

"Nor do I," said Mr Plipp

Mr Myame reflected. There was a pause of several seconds and then he coughed and his hirsute adornments sprang to attention. "Let us assume," he said, "that there *has* been at some time in this game a temporary and beneficial substitution of one ball for another, then, the question arises, was this a deliberate and dishonest substitution of one ball for another, or was it due to some entirely innocent misapprehension? In the former case we have no right to our victory. No, Sir. None whatever. We have to call this match off as—" he sought for an appropriate phrase—"a *non sequitur*. But if, on the other hand, the substitution by the player was pure and honest—and I happen to know this young Tewler as one of the most earnest young Christians in my charge, a veritable Child of God, let alone that he was suffering from considerable pain at the time from the concussion of the ball, then I have no hesitation whatever in saying that not only are we entitled to this match, but that it was meant and intended that we *should* win this match. The stars in their courses, if one may put it humbly and reverently, were fighting for us, and it would be sheer ingratitude—*ingratitude*—to quibble over this victory."

The young man regarded Mr Myame with a qualified admiration. "That doesn't leave anything more to be said about it, Sir, does it?" he said, pitching up his recovered ball and catching it again.

"I'm all for that," said Mr Plipp.

Mr Myame and Mr Plipp hurried to overtake their exultant crocodile in a thoughtful silence. There was no reason why they should not talk together, but strangely enough neither of them could think of anything suitable to say. Finally, at the house door Plipp said one word, "Tewler."

"No question about it," snapped Mr. Myame, closing the discussion.

Boys who had never had a civil word for Edward Albert Tewler before, could be heard in the dingy passage and schoolroom glorifying and elaborating his achievements—sucking up to him! . . .

And that is how he became a cricket fan and began to follow the Tests and collect pictures of eminent cricketers and watch matches on every possible occasion. There was hardly any grade of match that he could not watch now with helpful comments. "Well *run*, Sir!" "Keep 'em *down*, Sir!"

He did not play very much himself because you cannot be too careful about corrupting your style by inferior practice. But in his reveries, whistling after his fashion, he grew an immense beard—or wore a false beard perhaps—and made W. G. Grace seem a mere precursor to his own brighter and better batting. Or he returned triumphantly to the pavilion (all the other side out for nine), the super-Spoofforth of his day, and there among the applauding throng were Bert and Nuts, realising with amazement that this demon bowler was merely another of the endless impersonations of silent Teddy Tewler, their intimate and yet mysterious pal.

And henceforth "playing cricket" became a stock phrase with him, that phrase which still means so much to every Englishman, and which no Englishman can ever quite explain. We have submitted a sample, plucked straight from Regent's Park. "Do I play cricket with you or don't I?" he would demand of the Hidden Hand.

A new confidence appeared in his bearing. Hitherto Bert had unquestionably been the leader, but not now. And one day young Horry Budd, who had butted our hero playfully in the back after his custom, received the surprise of his life. Hitherto Edward Albert had been indisposed to resent these little attentions. Now suddenly he turned. "Vad-a-nuff-o-vis," said Edward Albert thickly.

He smacked Horry's face with extreme viciousness, and smacked again with all his strength. He overwhelmed Horry with surprise and dismay. Horry was a puncher, and face-smacking was outside his imagination. He had never smacked a face in his life. He howled aloud. The red marks remained for days.

"Nuffin to what I'll do to you, if I have any more of your cheek," said Edward Albert.

## CHAPTER 3

*Metamorphosis of Man*

SO the child Edward Albert passed on through boyhood, and approached that peculiar reconstruction in the human life-cycle known as adolescence.

"Peculiar", like every other word in this conscientious narrative, is written with deliberation. It is a metamorphosis. The change is indeed not so wide as it is between tadpole and frog, but it is much more marked in man, my zoologist friends tell me, than in most others of the land animals about us. Your cat, for example, does not undergo anything like the same transformation. It does not suddenly grow hair in unexpected places, change its miaow to a leonine roar, lose its teeth, and get a new set, become spotty and gawky with chemical and nervous uncertainty. Your kitten grows into a cat, but gradually and gracefully, it is a specialised and completed creature from the moment it opens its eyes on the world, and it has no metamorphosis at all. The human animal has, and Edward Albert, following the law of our species, metamorphosed.

Perhaps it is a new idea to you that man undergoes a metamorphosis much more after the fashion of a frog than do most other land animals. But it is not my fault that you do not know that. I have done my feeble utmost to help in saving you and our world from the dismal mess of antiquated misconception and misrepresentation, self-satisfaction and blank ignorance in which we wallow so tragically to-day. I have fought the academic classical tradition tooth and nail. If the idea of a metamorphosis is a new one to you, you have only those wretched impostors who pretended to educate you to blame. If you find anything perplexing and unusual in what is written here, here and in the first Chapter of Book the Third, ahead of you, it is due to their default. A few of us who have had the good fortune to get some real education have tried to supplement your possible deficiencies. We made,

and we have tried in vain to force into school and college use, a group of encyclopædic books of which *The Science of Life* is the one most relevant here. You can get it now in a single volume brought up to the date of 1938. You ought really to read it all, because you cannot begin to understand our world or face the present gigantic challenges of life without it.

But for our present purposes all I would direct you to consult is a diagram and the accompanying text taken from an article in the *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* by Dr W. G. Gregory. You will find it put as an Appendix at the end of this book. If you look at that and the one that precedes it, condensing what is known about the evolution of the Placental Mammals, you will grasp what I am saying here about a human metamorphosis and what I shall have to say further in Book the Third, about the extreme primitiveness of the *Hominidæ* in the scale of being. Because otherwise you will not realise the extreme primitiveness of Edward Albert in the scale of being. You can check back Dr Gregory in your Encyclopædia in the articles *Primates* and *Tarsiers*. You can supplement Dr Gregory if you like by inspecting a little lemuroid creature, the Spectral Tarsier, *Tarsier Spectrum*, in any Zoological Garden or collection of stuffed animals. It is an inhabitant of Malaya, and it has something dimly suggestive of our Edward Albert in its look and movements, a small, tailed, nocturnal, furry and rather scared Edward Albert. One of its fossil Eocene cousins, by the by, was so human in its bones that it was christened *Tetonius homunculus*, the primordial Little Man (Strubei). It is much nearer to your actual ancestor than the black magnificent gorilla, that formidable gentleman. It was close to our ancestor and the ancestors of all the monkeys and apes, but while they branched off from our family tree on a line of their own, from which there is no returning, becoming our cousins in various degrees, the Tarsier sub-order, came right on to the *Hominidæ* and us.

And after that much information, which ought to be totally unnecessary, you may begin to realise why I shall presently

be urging you to change the name of the species *Homo sapiens* to the more modest one of *Homo Tewler*. I shall be sorry if it causes you some trouble to follow me in this. I shall not blame you, but I must condole with you. You are the innocent victim of your upbringing. None of this is digression. I promised to write about Tewler and I write about Tewler now. I have to put him in his place in the universe. Which we share. I will tell you everything I know about Tewler, I will dissect and demonstrate on the creature, but for the few years of life that remain to me, I will be damned if I write a single propitiatory or mitigated line about our ancestry to please all the Tewlers in the world. We are a lowly and infantile breed. There is hardly a quadruped in the Zoo that is not more modified, evolved, distinguished and finished than ourselves. Go and look at the grace and finality of a tiger for example, or a gazelle, or a seal. . . .

As his metamorphosis proceeded, two new sets of problems invaded Edward Albert's mind. It was borne in upon him that he had to do certain things called earning a living, and simultaneously that complex of impulses, taboos, terrors and repressions, that onset of sex and sex education, which his mother had apprehended so anxiously, gathered about him and closed in upon him. Let us take the simpler issue first.

## CHAPTER 4

### *Feudal Strain?*

“**E**ARNING a living.” That phrase began to have a dim menace for him some time before his mother died. “You'll have to earn your living, you know, when I'm gone,” his mother would say when he was getting her to do his homework for him. Mixing up the idea of lessons, sufficiently disagreeable in themselves when you still had mother to help you, with earning a living when her help would be no longer available, didn't make the prospect more palatable. He averted his attention from it as long as he could.

George Orwell, an English Trotskyist writer with enormous feet, who fought very valiantly in Spain, recently made a study of the literature consumed by the English and American young at the close of their tadpole days. He produced generalisations about it, which I have partially forgotten, and so I do not think it is any breach of the undertaking I have made to keep ideas completely out of this book, if I refer to one observation of his that has stuck in my mind, because it will be very helpful in framing the adolescence of Edward Albert in its proper setting.

His point was that, by the showing of this literature, in matters of sex and business alike, either the young American is precocious or the young Briton is retarded. That retardation is not altogether disadvantageous. Because of the postponement of those adult preoccupations the British boys and girls get on with their school work with easier minds, and are found to be sounder and further advanced in their schooling than Americans of the same age. This cannot be due to any profound difference in race. The blood of the American population is hardly more mongrelised than the British. Then why?

I was reflecting on this problem ; albeit sternly resolved to put nothing about it into this story, but just for my own amusement, when it dawned upon me that though Edward Albert was born in the back streets of Camden Town in that melting-pot of humanity called London, both his mother and his father had lived, they and their progenitors, in a feudal world, in a feudal world from whose remote interferences the thirteen colonies escaped, finally and emphatically, a century and a half ago. What would seem strange about him to an American reader is just that difference. Feudal ! I had the clue. Generalisations evaporate at this word and fact resumes its sway.

Mrs Tewler's mother was born in the shires, under the shadow of a lord of the manor, and she was brought up, so to speak, bone-feudal. The Baptist connection was due to the fact that Dickybird was a Backslider from the Particular Baptists of Camden Town. His grandfather had found

religion there, but Dickybird had never become a full member by immersion, and the couple would probably have drifted back to the Anglican Communion if it had not been for his conspicuous inability to "find his place" in his prayer book. She was ashamed of him. The Baptists were easier.

Except for that one touch of dissent, Richard Tewler's tradition was just as feudal as his wife's. He was a Cockney craftsman of the fourth generation, and his Firm had been Royal Warrant Holders since Royal Warrant Holding began. The Royal Arms and "By Appointment to his Majesty," headed their bills. His grandfather and his father had both been with Colebrook and Mahogany all their lives, and they would as soon have thought of leaving the Firm, as the Firm would have thought of dismissing them. Colebrook and Mahogany pensioned off their old hands, helped them with their domestic difficulties, took an interest in their children, as a matter of course.

Now this feudalism which ramifies to this day through the British social structure and gives its literature and social habits and distinctions that peculiar affectation of high unspoken values which so baffles and irritates Americans, was the underlying cause why our hero, instead of rushing forward, like a young American or a young Jew or a young barbarian, to embrace and wallow in his adolescence, advanced upon it, so to speak back foremost, pretending as far as possible to himself and the world at large that it really wasn't there, and that it was not of the slightest consequence even if it was.

## CHAPTER 5

### *Terrifying Enterprise*

**U**NRESTRAINED youngsters think and talk of getting on in the world. Young Buffin Burleybank, who came into the school as a day boy for one short term until there was a vacancy for him at Mottiscombe, lived in an acquisitive

home atmosphere where making money was openly discussed and glorified. He had wonderful stories of "young Harmsworth" and "old Newnes". Young Harmsworth had lived just round the corner, so to speak, in Camden Town, and his father was an unsuccessful barrister who used to speak in the Camden Town Mock Parliament. And the youngster had borrowed a bit of money somehow, started something called *Answers*, started something else called *Comic Cuts*, and now was worth a cool million. Still young and worth a cool million. And Newnes had been just a little obscure country chemist until he read a bit out of a paper and said to his wife, "I call that a regular Tit Bit." And then came the great idea, why not have a magazine filled up entirely with Tit Bits, with unconsidered trifles picked up here there and everywhere? And he put a bit of capital into it and here he was 'normously rich. 'Normously rich. "Why! he owns pretty nearly every funicular in the world!"

"What's a funicular?" asked Edward Albert.

"My father says he does, anyhow," said Buffin, evading the question. "What I'm going to do is, go in for cars. Yes, cars. Put my shirt on them. These motor cars are going big. They cost a lot to make and they're always going to cost a lot to make. You got to have skilled exact workmen, my father says, and those you can't get cheap. No how. So if the demand grows the price will go up. See? They've got cars now about as cheap first-hand as ever they're going to be, and what people like doctors and commercial travellers and middle-class people will get will be anything from shop-soiled to tenth-hand. Well, *that's* a business for you. Eh? Growing and growing. You can buy 'em, do 'em up as good as new, sell 'em hire purchase, hire 'em out. In a few years only dukes and earls and millionaires will have the slick new cars. There won't be one car in ten on the road new. Not one in ten."

"You don't think they might somehow make really *cheap* cars?" speculated Edward Albert.

"They've tried it, in America. My father knows all about that. There's a man named Henry Ford and his cars—why!

they're a joke ! They rattle. They're ugly as sin. They fall to pieces. He makes jokes about 'em himself. Then there's these steam cars they have. Kettles on wheels. They blow out in a high wind. My father saw one of them blown out the other day. No. The car for a man of ordinary means is going to be the second-hand, third-hand, fourth-hand, high grade car, done-up and carefully renewed. There's lots of cars on the road now that will still be on the road in twenty-five years' time. And that's where little Buffin Burleybank means to come in. That's where we open the oyster. You watch me. Go to Buffin Burleybank for a car. Get his advice. See his selection. His 'normous selection. A Car for Everyman. There's wonderful twists and turns in it. There's such things as vintage years for cars, my father says. J'vever think of that ? "

" *What's a vintage year ?* " asked Edward Albert.

" My father says they'll buy 'em by their dates," said Buffin, overriding the question. " It's a great game. You got to watch out for everything. You got to keep your eyes skinned."

And excited by this home-grown faith in his business ability, he actually started a scheme of his own for buying and selling bicycles right there in the school, that even impressed Mr Myame. If you bought a single bicycle you were the public and you had to pay full price ; the dealer was bound by his contract with the wholesaler not to undersell. But suppose a few of you got together and made yourselves a firm and had an address and business notepaper all proper, then you could order half a dozen machines at trade rates and get them—Buffin was a little vague—twenty-five, thirty-five per cent off. Which meant, said Buffin, calculating rapidly, you get six at the price of four. " Practically," said Buffin, seeing Mr Myame was checking his figures slowly but earnestly. For he talked the idea out to Mr Myame after school one day, and Mr Myame was interested and bent his countenance towards him and seemed to half believe in him.

So it was that a firm named B. Burleybank and Co. came into actual being in Camden Town. It had the use of a small newsagent's shop for its address, and by advance payments by Mr Myame and Nuts MacBryde and a friendly

advance and an order from Burleybank *père*, who wanted to give the boy a bit of experience as well as a birthday present of a bicycle, the necessary capital was assembled and six shining bicycles were procured and stored, after a brief altercation, in the newsagent's back yard.

"And now," said our young entrepreneur, after handing out his three cost price bicycles to his three associates, "I've only got to sell the other three at the market rate and I stand in to make . . . ."

There were complications in the reckoning ; the stationery and so forth had to be paid for. And there was a difficulty he had not anticipated in finding just the particular people in Camden Town who were disposed to buy a bicycle in a hurry at the market rate. He persuaded the newsagent to put one of the unsold machines into the shop, and marked it at a ten per cent reduction as "A bargain. Slightly shop-soiled", but after a couple of days the newsagent insisted upon its removal because customers coming in for papers and cigarettes barked their shins against the treadle and swore something dreadful.

Buffin became almost wistful in his inquiries, "You don't happen to know anyone who wants a brand new bicycle in splendid condition at very little over cost price ?" He went about reading the faces of passers-by for the bicycle-buying look. Intimations of a transitory failure, of a lesson that would finally redound to his credit, came into his speeches. "It's not such a good thing as I thought. This. I started under-capitalised. If it wasn't for having to go to Mottiscombe I'd risk it now. I'd ask for three months' credit on twelve more bicycles, twelve, mind you, hire a shop-window and make a splash. And when the credit was up I'd pay upon what I'd sold and have credit extended for more. They'd do it if I talked to them. I'm getting the hang of it. . . . Well, let me tell you a day will come when all you timid snipe will remember how Buffin bought his first experience for forty pounds—maybe it will come to that, s'much as that—bought it for forty pounds and sold it for a million."

"And suppose 'e doesn't sell his bicycles," said Edward

Albert, whistling after his fashion. "Suppose they don't *let* him at Mottiscombe. Nice 'ole Eel be in."

Which indeed was precisely what happened. -Buffin went off to Mottiscombe and never more did the star of the Burleybanks rise above Edward Albert's horizon. Anything may have happened to them except success. Maybe Burleybank and Son went in too deep for second-hand cars before they heard of the use of gauges in mass production.

Edward Albert watched this burst of enterprise with envious disapproval when, first of all, he felt it might succeed, and then with that "told you so" feeling which is one of our subtler pleasures in this vale of tears.

But Mr Myame's transitory appreciation of Buffin's cleverness wounded our hero profoundly. There was an element of worldliness about it. He had expected more other-worldliness from Mr Myame. He anyhow had got out of it very well, he and Nuts. . . . It set one thinking.

## CHAPTER 6

### *First Steps in French*

THE feudal framework of Edward Albert's ideas would admit of no gainful enterprises of this kind whatever. His disposition was to do nothing of any sort anywhere until he was told. Quite time enough then.

"Earning a living" meant for him finding a "place", a "situation", both definitely sessile words. You ceased to float dangerously along the stream of life at the very earliest opportunity and struck root. You found where you could get the best pay for the least work—if possible with fixed rises and a pension scheme—and you settled down, trusting, admiring, but at the same time avoiding the humiliating company of your betters as much as possible. You got a nice little household of your own—but of that later. You started a "hobby" to amuse you in your spare time, you watched cricket and played golf, and so backed slowly towards the grave in which

you were to bury whatever talent you had ever possessed. Respectful but irresponsible dependence ; " ordering yourself lowly and reverently to all your betters ", as the dear old catechism puts it ; that was the feudal idea.

Before his mother's death, Edward Albert had been induced to contemplate the problem of his social anchorage so far as to listen to a suggestion made by one of her friends that a Gas Works Clerk was one of the soundest possible positions to which a modest young Believer might aspire. To qualify for such a place in the world, he heard the lady say it was best to go twice a week to the evening classes of the Imperial College of Commercial Science for their Course of Training in Business Methods. They issued certificates of proficiency in all the clerky arts, précis and book-keeping by single and double entry, commercial arithmetic, mensuration, long hand and shorthand. Elementary French—not French but *Elementary* French, whatever that may mean. This training was specially adapted to turning a crude human being into a Gas Works Clerk, and indeed she knew as a fact that the gas works people came to the College and accepted its certificates unquestioningly. The College, according to its copious prospectus, engaged in many other activities, the Lower Division Civil Service, London Matriculation and so on, but it was the Gas Works Clerk, one particular case she had known, that had seized upon the informant's imagination. He was such a *nice* young man.

Edward Albert listened carelessly at first and then attentively, and reflected. The College was situated in Kentish Town ; its hoarding made a brave show, and what he saw there was not so much the prospect of gumming himself down firmly as a Gas Works Clerk, as of going in the evening, unwatched and uncontrolled, through the magic of the lit streets to the college. One could start early and arrive late ; he was already an adept in such intercalary freedoms. He had still much of the lingering levity of boyhood and the Hidden Hand in his make up.

Then he would be able to loiter on his way outside the glittering temptations of the cinema theatre. He could stop

and see and read everything there was to be read and seen, contemplate the lively "stills", wondering. He could watch people going in. He wouldn't go in. That would be wrong. But there was no harm in asking what it would cost to go in. What would you see? And if after all, someday he did go in. It would be a sin of course, a dreadful sin, disobedience, deceit, all that. You might be run over on your way home and go straight to hell with all your sin upon you. . . .

But suppose you weren't run over! Lovely ladies, quite close up, kissing. Fellers carrying them off on their saddles. Shooting. Throwing knives. What harm would it be to see it once? Those were the days of the early Charlie Chaplins, Fatty Arbuckle, Mack Sennett; and dear Mary Pickford as "Little Pal" was dawning on a world that has always loved her. Magically silent they were, with a stirring piano accompaniment. Through those forbidden doors you could hear the music; you could get glimpses. . . .

Of course he would repent very bitterly before he went to bed—for one cannot be too careful—and pray God to preserve him, and promise never to do it again. God was pretty good at forgiving anyhow if you set about it in the right way. Seventy times seven and all that. "'Ave mercy on me, a miserable sinner, God; 'ave mercy on me. I was led away. I was tempted."

He felt he could get away with it. Those evening classes would be like a great door opening upon unknown mysteries and freedoms. You might stay out until after ten!

So that when the project was brought before Mr Myame, there was a very considerable discussion before it was deferred.

"I am all for it," said Mr Myame, "in due course. When *he* is ripe for it. But that is not yet. You see, at times and in some subjects he will *not* exert himself. I have had to note that in his reports. His ability, I maintain, is considerable, but until he makes more progress in his Elementary French, in his Arithmetic, in his dictation and parsing and handwriting—Look at those inky fingers now, Mrs Tewler! Is he ready yet to benefit by a Commercial College?"?

Edward Albert felt a spasm of hatred for Mr Myame.

"Of course, p'raps they teach you *better* in the College," said Edward Albert, and then, mitigating the blow; "Faster like."

"There's no Royal Road to Learning," said Mr Myame. "No. 'Thorough', has always been my motto. Like the great Earl Strafford. So let us go down to the foundations, the Elements. What is the French, Tewler, for 'the'?"

That was easy. "Ler Lar Lay," sang Edward Albert.

"Elementary French," said Mr Myame, "that is all he will ever have to study. Advanced French has an amount of innuendo in it. . . . I don't admire it. I hope he will never be able to read French books or go on one of those trips they advertise nowadays to Boulgne or Paris. French literature even at its best is tainted by a curious *continental* flavour. There is something un-English about it. All that is worth while in it has been translated and suitably expurgated. Or much of it could not be published here. But let us get on with our little examination. Tell me again, Tewler, what is the French for 'the'—in the singular."

"Masculine, *Ler*; feminine, *Lar*."

"And neuter, dear?" said Mrs Tewler encouragingly.

Mr Myame smiled gravely. "I am afraid there is no neuter in French. None whatever. 'Lay', the third word you heard, is simply the plural.

"The French language brings sex into everything," Mr Myame proceeded to explain. "That is its nature. Everything is 'il' or 'elle'. 'Il' is he and 'elle' is she. Nothing is neuter in French—nothing."

"Extraordinary!" said Mrs Tewler.

"A table, *oone table*, is feminine, believe it or not. *Oone shays*, feminine also, is a chair. But a knife, *oon canif*, is masculine. *Oon*, you observe, not *Oone*. You notice the difference, masculine and female."

"A male knife! A female chair! It makes me feel—quite *uncomfortable*," said Mrs Tewler. "Why do they do it?"

"There it is. And now, Tewler, how do you say 'the father and the mother'?"

" Le père ate la mère."

" Good. Very good. And now for the plural."

Gently but firmly Mr Myame led him on from this first reassuring stage to more difficult combinations. Various relations, an aunt, an uncle, a nephew, various objects, apples, books, gardens, houses, encumbered the mind ; ownership, *Mong* and *mar* and *note*, complicated their relationship. By the time they got to " To the books of the aunt of the gardener of our house," Edward Albert had lost his head completely. He was guessing and floundering. Mr Myame corrected him and tangled him up almost caressingly.

" You see," said Mr Myame, " he has it in a sort of way, but he is unsound. He is not yet Thorough. The grounding is loose because so far he has not given his mind to it. Until he has all that firm and clear and hard as a rock, it would be a mere waste of money to send him on to the College. . . ."

## CHAPTER 7

### *Mr Myame is Uneasy*

MR JIM WHITTAKER had sent his large expensive wreath to Mrs Tewler's funeral in accordance with the best feudal traditions of Colebrook and Mahogany, and at the same time he had recalled with surprise that there must be some family or something that had never been looked up and looked over by the Firm. There was no need for anyone who had inherited Richard Tewler's dexterity of hand and solicitude of manner to go wandering beyond its range. Mr Whittaker had made a memorandum on a bit of paper, " Tewler boy query ", but it had slipped under some other papers and he had forgotten it under the pressure of the sale of the great Borgman collection. It was only some six months later that the scrap of paper turned up to recall him to his obligation. " God bless my Heart and Liver," said Mr Jim. " I might have lost sight of him ! "

So one morning Mr Myame beetled over Edward Albert

for some moments and then said : " Tewler. A word with you in my study."

" What's he found out *now* ? " thought Edward Albert, for plainly there was trouble in the air.

" Siddown, " said Mr Myame, and became hairily and darkly interrogative with his head on one side. He trifled with various objects on his table and began rather slowly. " I had ah—a visitant—so to speak, this morning. An inquirer. Who wanted to know, to put it briefly, everything he could possibly know about you. He wanted to know how old you are, what your abilities are, your prospects, what you hoped to do in the world." (" 'Strordinary ! " interjected Edward Albert.) " Among other things he asked who paid your school fees ? I told him that, as your guardian, I did. I asked him by what authority he was making these—these investigations. He said on behalf of a Mr James Whittaker, who carries on a china and glass business under the alias—or shall we say ? the pseudonym—of Colebrook and Mahogany. It seems your father worked for him—or them—whichever one ought to say. Do you know anything about this ? "

" Why, it was 'im sent that great wreath at mother's funeral ! " said Edward Albert.

" I remember. A really extravagant wreath. Yes. It was *that* person. Now why should he suddenly want to know all these things ? "

" Was it 'im ? " asked Edward Albert.

" No. It was some sort of agent. Never mind. Have you by any chance written to this Mr Whittaker ? "

" I 'adn't got 'is address."

Mr Myame regarded Edward Albert with a look of intense penetration. " Or you might have done so ? "

" Jest to thank 'im for that wreath of 'is."

Mr Myame dismissed some obscure suspicion. " Well, he seems to think he is entitled to know all about you. I would like to know how far he is. Your dear good mother made me your guardian. She was a sweet pure precious soul and your religious and moral welfare was her first thought and her last. She feared for you. Perhaps it was that very Mr

James Whittaker with his pseudonyms and misrepresentations that she feared. And if he wanted to communicate with you why should he resort to one of those Private Inquiry Agencies? Why should a Private Inquiry Agent come asking all sorts of questions about the conduct of my school?"

"I've read advertisements somewhere. 'Does it take all that time shopping? Inquiries as to character. Missing relatives traced'. D'you think perhaps this Mr Whittaker is some sort of relation? Maybe he wasn't thinking anything about the school. Didn't mean any harm like. He'd just lost me and wanted to find me."

"If he is a relation, then it is manifest your dear Mother thought he was not the sort of relation that would do you any good. This is all I wanted to ask you, Edward."

The scrutiny intensified.

"You did *not* communicate your whereabouts to this Mr Whittaker—I believe that—and I would like you to give me your promise on your word of honour that you will not do anything of the sort. Except with my knowledge and consent."

"I'd like to thank him for that lovely wreath, Sir. I think my mother would have appreciated that wreath."

"I am not so sure, Edward. In this matter I ask you to be guided by me. As your dear mother wished. I might perhaps send him a message on your behalf."

It was plain to Edward Albert's cautious mind that the less he committed himself to Mr Myame and the sooner he found out what this Mr Whittaker was up to, the better. "You know best, Sir," he said. "Of course if he goes about pretending to be Colebrook and Mahogany, it certainly can't be right. . . ."

Mr Myame did not challenge the name of the firm. Good!

"I can rely on you, Edward?"

"Certainly, Sir." And with that Edward Albert escaped and wrote down the name of Colebrook and Mahogany there and then on a scrap of paper.

In many ways Buffin Burleybank had enlarged Edward

Albert's knowledge of the dodges and expedients of life. He had learnt that there were things called Trade Directories. There was one, he discovered, in that accommodating newsagent's shop. It was an old one, but no Trade Directory was half as old as the firm of Colebrook and Mahogany, Royal Warrant Holders, of North Lonsdale Street. And so Edward Albert, having been sent on a mission to Godberry's, the school-furnishers in Oxford Street, to inquire if they dealt in second-hand desks and if so, would they give him a list of any bargains they had on offer, successfully lost his way and was presently contemplating for the first time the wonder and beauty of Colebrook and Mahogany's magnificent windows. There you had the most wonderful china elephants, great blue vases with pictures of delightful scenery, white china statuary, gigantic bowls, lovely half-naked gods and goddesses of shining porcelain, dinner services for kings, decanters and glass beyond description.

He allowed his imagination to play loose with fantastic possibilities. He was related to this man who, for some mysterious purpose, ran this mighty and lovely business in the name of Colebrook and Mahogany. What was he trying to conceal by this? Some relationship? And what, if presently everything was brought to light, would that hidden relationship turn out to be? Edward Albert skipped a vast complication of possibilities, just as he skipped the plot stuff in the stories he read. He landed precisely where he wanted to land for the purpose of reverie. He was the long-lost rightful heir and this man, either out of affection or remorse, or just no reason at all, was going to do him justice.

This place must be worth *fousands* of pounds, fousands and fousands and fousands of pounds. . . .

He could say to all sorts of people: "I came into some money. I came into—

"Forty, fifty 'undred fousand? Well, fifty, say?"

He would say it to Mr Myame. He would walk into the classroom when all the school was present. He could come in late for prayers. "Sorry to be late, but I've had important news, Sir. 'Fraid I'll have to be leaving you. You see I came

into fifty fousand pounds and I been put down for Eton and 'Arrow and Oxford and Cambridge, leastways as soon as there's a vacancy anywhere. I'll be looking in on you one of these days when I'm seeing the match at Lord's. Maybe I'll be in the match. If so"—here we turn to the school—"I hope I'll be able to get all of you chaps tickets for the Pavilion. . . ." Make 'em sit up, that will. Or Buffin Burleybanks. "Where'd you get that 'At ?" Buffin would say. "I lef old Myame's for Eton," Edward Albert would answer. "What sort of school is Mottiscombe ?"

Reluctantly he turned away from the great windows and, still dreaming and whistling softly to himself, pursued his errand to Messrs Godberry's and so home to school again.

"You've been a long time," said Mr Myame, faintly suspicious.

"I lost my way a bit," said Edward Albert. "I arst a man who told me wrong."

And now, how to get past the vigilance of Mr Myame to this opulent and mysterious friend behind that tremendous façade ?

## CHAPTER 8

### *Snares for Mr Myame*

THE letter composed by Edward Albert was coloured in its phraseology by the beginnings of instruction in commercial correspondence and perhaps also by the Home Letter with which the school sessions terminated. It ran as follows :

"DEAR SIR,

"In reply to your esteemed inquiries we (corrected to 'I ') beg to submit to you where I am at present. I am situated at present in a Commercial Academy for Young Gentlemen in the care of my esteemed guardian and principal Mr Abner Myame, A.C.P., Member by Examination of the University of London, etc., who is my trustee and guardian.

It is my pleasure to express to you my gratitude for your kindness in sending her (corrected to 'my mother') that very beautiful wreath. I am sure she would have enjoyed it very much could she have known of it, which unhappily was not the case. I would like to see you and talk to you very much, but Mr Myame does not think so. I want your advice, Sir. Please reply to the above address and not directly to the school. With the sincerest thanks for your past valued favours and an assurance of my continued efforts to merit your esteemed patronage,

"I beg to submit myself, Sir,  
 "Your most obedient servant,  
 "E. A. TEWLER.  
 "Don't write to the school."

Mr Jim Whittaker re-read this letter for the sixth time and then handed it to his friend Sir Rumbold Hooper, the well-known patent specialist, the omniscient solicitor, Old Artful, the friend of man and woman, gallant but discreet. They were sitting together in a warm corner of the Reform Club Smoking Room after lunch. They were consuming excellent but deleterious white port—and they realised themselves in a glow of tawny gold. They knew almost too certainly that they were wise and worthy men.

"Document One," said Mr James Whittaker. . . . "And now for Document Two. . . . It's illuminating, isn't it? And here is what Keyhole and Sludge report. It seems to me that the worthy Myame is a frightened, bad-tempered man. What's upset him? But read it. . . ."

Document Two ran as follows :

"DEAR SIR,

"Some days ago I was disagreeably surprised by a visit from a private inquiry agent, one of those instruments of blackmail and intimidation who are becoming such a serious menace nowadays. He mentioned your name and I did not at first realise the nature of his errand. He pressed me with a number of questions some of which I realised later he had no

right whatever to ask. If you wanted to communicate with me I should have thought it would have been possible to employ some more acceptable intermediary. I gathered from this agent of yours that you wish to trace your young friend my ward Edward Albert Tewler. Letters sent to his former address had it seems gone astray and been returned. He is in excellent health and making satisfactory progress with his studies, more particularly in Elementary French, commercial correspondence and Scripture. His cricket also has greatly improved. He has asked me to tell you on his behalf how much he appreciated the beautiful wreath you sent when his mother passed over to her peace among God's chosen. He felt her loss very keenly, but I hope and pray it may prove a blessing in disguise for him, turning his mind to those deeper things in life, to which he has hitherto been somewhat inattentive. I do not know whether you are aware that like his parents he is a Peculiar Baptist and that under the guidance of our dear wise pastor, Mr Burlap, he is now preparing to become a full member of our little church. He is greatly preoccupied with these matters and I think it is very undesirable that he should be distracted. I shall prefer it if you will deal directly with me henceforth and not through a hired investigator.

"Sincerely yours,

"ABNER MYAME,

"A.C.P. Member by Examination of London University."

"That hired investigator seems to have put him through a bit of a grilling, and he seems to have answered a lot of questions he needn't have done, before he realised what he was doing. Ah ! here's the young sleuth's report. Quite an intelligent report too. Keyhole and Sludge—I know a thing or two about Keyhole and Sludge. It must be quite a change for them to be fishing in clean water. So Chadband is guardian and trustee and practically everything. He seems to be in a pretty strong position."

"Chadband ? I should have thought it was Squeers we had to deal with."

"What a fellow Dickens was!" said Mr Jim Whittaker. "How he knew his English! *Bleak House* is as complete and deadly a picture of England as we shall ever get. The types, the temperaments, the Tite Barnacles and all the rest of them. Nobody can touch him! How he poured it out! Mixed with mud. With a lot of mud. Like Shakespeare. Like everything English." ("Dostoievsky, for example," whispered Hooper unheeded, "or Balzac.") "And the public he wrote for! He had to tell them when to laugh and when to cry. And he couldn't bear not to have 'em all chuckling and sniffing with him. All the same he knew the English mixture. How completely he knew it! No wonder the highbrows hate him! Micawber, Chadband, Horace Skimpole, Mrs Jellaby, Squeers. There isn't an Englishman alive who doesn't correspond to some character or other of his—or some combination of them. Not one. How he laced it all together from Tulkinghorn to that poor little wretch 'Jo'! Marvellous!"

Sir Rumbold reflected. "I never had your obsession with Dickens. Still—he got over a vast breadth of canvas, I admit. When did you read *Bleak House* last, Whittaker?"

"I read it and re-read it when I was at Cambridge. No!—at Winchester."

"Don't read it again—ever. There's a time in a young man's life for reading Dickens—and a time to stop reading Dickens."

"I could read *Pickwick* now with the same enjoyment—"

"You don't."

"I tell you—"

"Don't. It won't be true, Whittaker. You'll think it is true and you'll get irritated if I throw doubts. Why cannot you be moderate, Whittaker? What a gift you have for unqualified enthusiasms! You over-do everything, unless you forget to do anything about it. Shakespeare isn't all good. You'd die rather than confess it. If you had to choose two books for a desert island, you'd choose the Bible—and Shakespeare. You say that at once. I wouldn't. I know them too well. If there was a third book allowed, you'd say Dickens. . . ."

" This lit'ry talk is all very well," said Whittaker. " But where does it get us ? "

" Who began it ? "

" Have it your own way. But what concerns me now is this problem of Squeers-Chadband. What are we to do about him ? "

" It's poor ' Jo ' out of Tom's all Alone we have to consider," said Sir Rumbold. " Do you remember poor Jo ? He died very beautifully but rather incredibly repeating the Lord's Prayer."

" I remember Jo all right. But what I can do for him, I don't know. His letter is a shriek for help, but Squeers-Chadband seems to have got him tied up body and soul, all ready to devour."

" You think ? "

" Should I consult you if I didn't ? "

" Another little port won't do us any harm. . . ."

" Well now, what standing have we ? Whatever little pile of savings Ma Tewler left is completely in his hands until the kid is twenty-one, and, as the report points out, there is nothing to prevent him paying not only interest but principal into his own account as school and tuition fees, and transferring investments and so forth and so on. He seems to be launching out and enlarging his school. What's to prevent him buying our little misery a partnership in his own school ? He can break him down to a junior partner, and make a sort of unpaid assistant of him. Something that dropped from him, the report says, seems to suggest that. What right has anyone to intervene ? "

" We'll see about that later. Why is Chadband in a funk about it at all ? Why doesn't he face us out ? "

" That puzzles me."

" Conscience makes cowards of us all, Whittaker. Our investigator makes a suggestion. That youngster ought to be at Scotland Yard, by the way, instead of defiling himself with Keyhole and Sludge. But you see he suggests here that Chadband began by keeping accounts for a month or so until he felt safe about something, and that since then he has just

been swiping money out of the trust whenever he felt like it. The appetite grows with what it feeds on. What was it he had to feel safe about? Well—let us consider. *You?*"

"How me?"

"As the boy's next of kin or father perhaps?"

"But—"!

"When you didn't follow up that evidently much too impressive wreath, he dropped the idea, and now this inquiry of yours has revived it."

"My dear Hooper! Damnation! You don't imagine!"

"No. But Chadband may. You can't imagine the ideas he has about—our sort of people. I see no reason why he shouldn't go on imagining it for a bit. I don't think it would give you any standing in the case, but he may think it might."

"Preposterous!"

"A time will come when you'll have to drop that double port after lunch. It makes you gouty and testy. *I* can stand it but you can't. It's your hormones or something. . . . Anyhow Chadband's not a well-informed man. You must always in this sort of affair consider the limitations of the particular individual you are dealing with. *He* may imagine there is some sort of legal supervision of trustees. There isn't but there ought to be. There ought to be a sort of Public Trustee for these things. There will be one of these days. Let that pass. But evidently he can't stand up to any sort of examination of his accounts, and that is what scares him. He's just been drawing cheques out of the trust account, selling securities, and going ahead, building a new classroom, throwing out a wing for a third dormitory. And what we have to consider is just how we can go through his passbooks."

"We can't."

"We can."

"How can we?"

"And without any slur on your high moral character."

"Well, just consider! The wife of a trusted employee! Damn it! I wish you wouldn't keep harping on that idea. It's disagreeable. Things like this without a word of truth in them get about. And when once they get about. . . ."

"Forgive me. We'll drop all that. When I tried that suggestion I hadn't thought of the real way to do the job. Now I have."

"Well?"

"You see," said Sir Rumbold, "you owe the boy a considerable sum of money."

"The devil I do!"

"Yes. You owe him well over a hundred pounds."

"First I've heard about it. You get wilder and wilder."

"You see you have a system of crediting commissions to your staff as a sort of bonus to the retiring allowance."

"It's news to me."

"All done very quietly. Yes. You don't know *everything* about your Firm, you know. By a long chalk. Listen to what I am telling you. Don't keep interrupting. I'm doing this job for you, aren't I? This bonus may have its imaginative element, but the fact is it gets us right into Chadband's pass-book and that's where we want to get."

"He'll just swipe that extra hundred pounds. What's to prevent him?"

"That's easy."

"I don't see it."

"No. But listen! *You* have to see that it is invested to the best advantage. That is in the instrument or deeds or whatever they are—leave that to me—and that is where we poke our inquiring little fingers into the guardianship of the worthy Myame. We go and see him. We look at him hard. We ask for insignificant details. Somehow, and quite improperly and unjustly, the word embezzlement creeps into the discussion. Does your slow but solid intelligence begin to grasp the situation now?"

"Suppose he fights when he realises he is cornered?"

"Chadband isn't going to fight. Trust me. We'll have him whining in no time."

## CHAPTER 9

*Out of the Deeps, Oh Lord!*

"**I**F the Lord had not been on my side," said Mr Myame, "when men rose up against me, they had swallowed me up quick when their wrath was kindled against me. Then the waters had overwhelmed me, the stream had gone over my soul.

"Yes, but thou spared him, Lord. His weeping was turned to joy. Blessed be the Lord who hath not given us a prey to their teeth. Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers ; the snare is broken and we are escaped. Blessed words. Oh blessed words ! So thou dealtest with thy servant David ! So thou dealest with all sinners that repent. And now—do I cry in vain ? Are not these blessed words for me ? Are not these words for me ? Out of the darkness I cry. Let my cry come unto thee."

It was late at night and he was in his study in sore tribulation. Wrestling with the Spirit. For some months he had been living in a state of great spiritual contentment. Now suddenly a terrible darkness had closed in upon him. His sense of Divine Guidance had departed from him. He delivered these long treasured words with profound emphasis and paused. But there came no answer to him in the stillness without or within.

"Hide not thy face from me," he resumed, "in the day when I am in trouble ; incline thine ear unto me : In the day when I call, answer me speedily. For my days are consumed like smoke, and my bones are burnt as an hearth. My heart is smitten, and withered like grass ; so that I forget to eat my bread. By reason of the voice of my groaning my bones cleave to my skin. I am like a pelican of the wilderness : I am like an owl of the desert. I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house top. Mine enemies reproach me all the day ; and they that are mad against me are sworn against me. For I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping, because of thine indignation and thy wrath : for thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down."

No comfort came to him.

On the table in front of him was the One Good Book, and in his distress and search for guidance Mr Myame had resorted to an old-fashioned expedient, opening the precious volume with his eyes shut, running his finger down the page, and then taking the verse on which it rested as his message. But his first verse had been Genesis x, 23, and the words were : " And the children of Aram ; Uz and Hul, and Gether, and Mash."

He had pondered, but there was no light in that, none whatever. He had tried again and got First Chronicles xii, 27. It was just as opaque. " And Jehoiada was the leader of the Aaronites, and with him were three thousand and seven hundred."

" Three thousand and seven hundred," he reflected. " No. It's nothing like that. It isn't anything like that. Anyhow."

Then he had resorted to his well stored memory for consolation and found no consolation, neither wind, nor thunder, nor a still small voice. He stood, at the end of his tether, bowed down, helpless, God-forsaken.

Penitence and prayer. He knelt before his fireside chair and prayed. Prayed for light, prayed that at least he might know why the Spirit had gone out of him. And at last, still on his knees, he confessed. " I have sinned, Oh Heavenly Father. I am no more worthy to be called thy Son."

A vast load upon his shoulders seemed to lighten. " I have sinned. I have been presumptuous. I have taken upon myself—" He weighed his words carefully. " More than I should. . . .

" Not *my* will but *thy* will be done. . . .

" I presumed and thou has chastened me. But thou who readest the heart, thou knowest that in my pride it seemed to me that thou hadst delivered this task into my hands, to take this poor evil-hearted treacherous child and lead him into the light, to mould his heart and mind, and make him one of thy Holy Saints, to take him as my partner and at last my successor in this thy school—for to Thee alone be the praise. To make this School a school of souls, a real Preparatory School for thy service, a centre of light in this dark world. . . ."

The Divine Spirit made no audible reply, but it seemed now to Mr Myame that he or it was listening. The good man searched further into the situation.

"But that was not Thy way, Oh Lord. That was not Thy Will and thou hast chastened me. Thou hast raised up a serpent in my bosom. . . ."

For some moments Mr Myame was at a loss for words. "He hath sharpened his tongue like a serpent. Adder's poison is under his lips. Adder's poison. The proud have laid a snare for me and cords; they have spread a net by the wayside; they have set gins for me. . . . Heap burning coals upon him. . . ."

He paused lest there should be any mistake about this. Then he resumed, addressing himself more particularly to Edward Albert.

"What shall be given unto thee or what shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue? Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper. Yea indeed. Coals of juniper. Woe is me that I dwell in the tents of Kedar! My soul hath long dwelt with him that hateth peace. . . . But that, Oh Lord, is all over now. I cast him forth, according to thy will. Verily I cast him forth to have his part with the wicked. Forgive him, Lord, for he is young and foolish. Remember his transgression that at last he may find grace. Chasten me, yes, because I did not prove a better shepherd for him, but chasten *him* also! Chasten him too, Oh Lord. Chasten him and bring him back in thine own good time to thy salvation."

He paused and sighed heavily. He felt he was being very generous and that the Holy Spirit would appreciate this. Bunyan's burthen was palpably lighter on his shoulders, but still it was there.

He rose slowly to his feet and stood and gloomed. He mingled a certain element of soliloquy with his next address to the eternal.

"If it is thy Will that I abase myself, thy Will be done. But Lord how can I pay it back? Thou knowest how matters stand. If I humble myself. If thou shouldst soften their hearts. If, for instance, part of it could be made into a mortgage, a first mortgage. . . ."

Men's judgments of their fellow men are too often crude and rash. Mr Myame was no Chadband after the fashion of Dickens' cruel portrait. He was a sincere, earnest Believer. He would have been the first to disclaim intellectual power. He pretended to no great learning. It was only the very simplest members of the congregation who imagined that he could read the Scriptures in the original Greek and Hebrew. But like most of that little church he was rich in the Gifts of the Spirit. What are intellectual powers and learning when it comes to the Gifts of the Spirit? Given those, you can teach anybody everything that matters, here and hereafter. That has been the strength of Believers ever since Religion began.

The Gifts of the Spirit are so copious, the inheritance of our common Christianity is so vast and various, that practically anything in the way of belief except Monism and Atheism can be picked out of its limitless treasury of exalting but contradictory statements and traditions. The orthodoxies and heresies alike are all no more than choice selections from that stupendous abundance. All the priestly religions have found it expedient for their own stability to restrain reference to the Holy Scriptures. But the invention of paper and of printing from movable type, let loose an unexpected flood of Bibles upon Christendom, and the Anabaptists, the General Baptists, the Particular Baptists and a great multitude of other non-conformists ensued.

None of this, by the way, is dissertation or generalisation or "ideas" or anything of that sort. There is no breach of our undertaking here. This is a plain and simple exposition of the fundamental processes that were going on in Mr Myame's poor troubled hairy beetling head. He had been born into the little Camden Town church, and he had obeyed the injunction to search the Scriptures very faithfully. What his group of believers searched them for were scraps and phrases, often incomplete sentences or misapplied interpolations, that fell in with their already firmly established ways of thought. They picked these out and let the rest of that unmanageable abundance slide. They were blind to it. The Bible abounds in contradictions of the most varied sort,

and though there are millions of Bible Readers, pledged to get through the Word about every year or so, yet their Faith burns so brightly in them that not one of them seems ever to observe an inconsistency.

Mr Myame was a Trinitarian Bible Christian to the bone, and he had no doubt whatever that the Holy Ghost, having wantonly chosen him for salvation out of the general multitude of the hopelessly damned, was now, with the assistance of Almighty Providence engaged in an edifying wrestling match catch as catch can, with him for the good of his soul. The stars, the gulf of time, the intricate wonder of things unknown, were just the highly impressive but relatively insignificant adornment of the garment of this God who was trying out Mr Myame so sorely that night. There was not a scrap of make-believe about this superb wrestling match. He wrestled with his Deity in perfect good faith.

He and the Spirit were still battling darkly when he went upstairs.

His wife coughed and woke up.

" You are very late, Abner," she said. " Is anything the matter ? "

" The hand of the Lord is very heavy upon me," he said. " He has—— I can't tell you. But a great darkness has come upon my soul."

He divested himself of his upper garments in silence, assumed his long grey-green flannel nightshirt and then in all modesty removed his shoes and trousers. That, by the way, was as much as she had ever seen of him, and he had seen even less of her.

" I have sinned. I have been presumptuous and God has punished my pride. That boy Tewler. . . ."

He paused.

" I always thought there was something a little sneakish about him."

" I pray God that some day I may be able to forgive him," he said.

Terrible words to say.

And in the night he tossed and worried and talked in his

sleep. Sometimes he was praying. He was praying that he might be humble, that God would temper this cup to his lips, that he might be comforted and restored to God's favour. And sometimes he seemed to be doing sums. And anon he seemed to be addressing himself to Edward Albert in language which, though generally scriptural, was invariably unpleasant. Towards morning he seemed to come to a definite conclusion. He spoke as if he was wide awake. "As the Scotch say, I must 'dree my weird'" he said in an exceedingly loud voice, and became quite still.

And presently he fell asleep with his mouth wide open, and snored.

"He giveth his beloved sleep," whispered his devoted wife.

She had followed all these distressful phenomena with sympathetic interest. It seemed he had fought a good fight and won. She stifled a fit of coughing for his sake. Presently she also sank into slumber.

Such was the deep spiritual conflict through which Mr Myame passed, because these two worldlings in their so-called *Reform Club* made a net for his feet and compassed him about, and, understanding nothing of the matter, called him "Chadband". Would a Chadband, a deliberate hypocrite, have achieved the stern self-abandonment with which he now set himself to readjust Edward Albert's affairs? That strains the Chadband theory. And would a mere self-regarding Chadband have displayed the same intensity of indignation at the wickedness as he conceived it, of Edward Albert's behaviour? His wrath was not after the manner of a Chadband, or a Chadband-Squeers; his wrath and anger were the wrath and anger of David King of Israel—in humbler circumstances, of course.

I do not know precisely what they mean, but the only words that occur to me to round off this description are "Chadband forsooth!"

So let it rest at that.

Beyond all question Mr Myame was of the stuff that Saints are made of. This is before all things a truthful novel, and that is the truth about him—and about them.

## CHAPTER 10

*Faith and Hope*

SO it was that at last Edward Albert entered the presence of Jim Whittaker. He was ushered through long aisles of shining and glittering glass ware and china and porcelain into a large comfortable office where Mr James Whittaker was dictating letters to a bright-haired young stenographer. "That's Tewler," he said, looking round for an instant. "Glad to see you, my boy. Sit down on that sofa there. I'll be done with these letters in a brace of shakes and then we'll have a talk."

Dreams of being the missing heir or the long-lost son or half brother vanished beyond recall. Edward Albert reverted to the feudal system. He had been preparing for this encounter for four days, chiefly in the Public Library and with the librarian's assistance, and his meditations and enquiries had not been without result.

"That's all for the present, Miss Scoresby," said Mr Whittaker and rotated startlingly in his chair as the bright-haired secretary gathered up her pads and pencils. Edward Albert had never seen a rotating armchair before. "Let's have a look at you, young Tewler. What sort of hands have you got?"

Edward Albert hesitated, but under encouragement held out his hands.

"Not like your father's. His were broader. You don't happen to draw or paint or do anything like that?"

"No, I *don't*, Sir," said Edward Albert.

"H'm. No fretwork or anything of that sort?"

"I'm not much use with my 'ands, Sir. No."

"You can put 'em down. H'm. So you don't take after your father in that sort of thing. That's a pity. What we are going to do about you, Mr Edward Albert Tewler, I don't quite know. Old Myame has blown up like a powder magazine. He doesn't seem to like you a bit. You've just put him out something awful. . . ."

" I reely didn't mean to 'urt Mr Myame, Sir. I reely didn't. 'E's a *good* man. 'E really is a good man, but I did think I'd a right to see you. After you sent that wreath and everything. He's Narrer, Sir. That's the fact about 'im. 'E's Narrer. 'E's got it into his head you're not a Believing Christian and that you're worldly and that seeing you won't do me anything but ser'ous harm. So he don't seem to mind what he said or did so long as I didn't see you. He's called me perfectly dreadful things, Sir, perfectly dreadful things. Serpents. Poison, Sir. Coals of Jupiter, 'e says, got to be 'eaped on my head. What *are* coals of Jupiter, Sir? He's sent me to Coventry. None of the boys must speak to me or me say anything to them. He says he can't bear the sight of me. Spawn of the devil he says I am. He's turned me out of the classes and I've had to go and sit all day in the Public Library. It isn't fair to me, Sir; it isn't fair. I never meant to 'urt 'im like that."

He sat forward on the sofa, hands on knees, a mean and meagre little creature, under-nourished and crazily taught, doing his best to exist and make something of a world of which his fundamental idea was that you cannot be too careful. He sensed rather than apprehended the feudal link that put Mr James Whittaker under an obligation to him.

" He did ask you not to talk to me; didn't he? "

" But how was I to know, Sir, that he'd take it so serious? "

" Right up to the time he found out, he was all right with you? "

" He was strict, Sir. But then he's naturally strict. He's such an upright man, Sir. He don't seem to understand disobedience."

" Quite like *his* Old Man," said Jim Whittaker, but his impiety was happily over the head of his hearer. " And then you became an adder and so forth and so on."

" Yessir."

" What are these coals of Jupiter you keep talking about? " asked Jim Whittaker. " I've never heard of them."

" I don't know rightly what they are, Sir, but they're sure to

be something very disagreeable, Sir, if 'e got 'em out of the Bible. They're 'eaped on your 'ed, you see, Sir."

" What, when you go to hell ? "

" *Before* that, I think, Sir. I thought you might know, Sir."

" No. I must look it up. And so you're not a Believing Christian, Jo—I mean Edward. You're beginning Doubt very young."

" Oo ! No, Sir," protested Edward Albert, much alarmed. " Don't imagine that. I 'ope I'm one of the Saved. I know that my Redeemer liveth. But what I feel, Sir, is that it isn't anything to get so Narrer about. That's where I seem to 'ave 'urt Mr Myame."

" There's something in that. Tell me some more about what you believe ? If you don't mind."

Edward Albert made a great effort. " Well, *Christianity* ! Sir. What everybody knows in England. Chrise died for me and all that. I suppose he knew what he was doing. 'E shed his precious blood or us, and I hope I'm truly thankful, Sir. It's in the creed, Sir. It's nothing to get angry about and be unpleasant to other people, calling them nasty names out of the Bible and carrying on just as though they was cheating somehow. . . ."

" You don't think *everybody*'s saved, eh ? That, you know, would be a serious heresy, Tewler. I forget which—Perfectionism or something—but it would be."

" I don't fink at all, Sir. I don't know enough. Only I feel if Chrise died to save us sinners, 'E wouldn't make a mess of it and leave most of us out. Like that, Sir. Would 'E, Sir ? If you repent truly and believe."

" And you believe ? "

" Like anything, Sir. Don't make no mistake about that, Sir. I says my prayers and 'ope to be forgiven. I do my best to be good. I've never scoffed in my life. I've never used bad language. Never. I've listened to it but I've never used it No, Sir."

" And the less said about it all the better ? "

" Yessir."

He replied so eagerly and with such manifest relief that Jim Whittaker realised the religious Inquisition was at an end.

"And so, to come to business. We had a sort of discussion with the worthy man here. He's still"—he got the only word for it—"he's Wraath with you. Wraath."

Edward Albert featured blameless distress.

"He says he wants you to leave his—his high-class establishment and live elsewhere."

"But where *am* I to live?"

"I think we can arrange something. You see, you will have a small income."

"What, my *own*? To spend?"

"We think you can be trusted to do that. You'll have to be careful, you know."

"One can't be too careful."

"That's exactly the principle. You see your mother left a little property in the savings bank and in various investments—not very much but quite enough to keep you—and Mr Myame has invested practically all of it in his school—on your behalf. We've arranged with him that this shall take the form of a first mortgage on his property, with reasonable arrangements to pay it off——"

"I don't rightly know what a mortgage is," said Edward Albert.

"You needn't. They'll see to all that in Hooper's office. You're the mortgagee and Myame is the mortgagor. It's perfectly simple. He mortgages his school to you. See? Mortgage. And what it comes to is that you will get something like two guineas and a half a week, of which about five bob will be capital repayment which you'll have to put by—or Hooper's office might do that for you—and you'll have to live on that, and I should think you can rub along quite well until you begin to earn a living. That's the outlook, and the next question is, what do you want to get up to? Then we can decide where you ought to live and all that. What's your idea about all that, Tewler?"

"Well, Sir, it's like this. I '*ave* been making 'nquiries as you might say! There's a very nice gentleman who's Librarian in

the Public Library and he's been a great 'elp. It's no good me trying to 'ide it from you, Sir. I'm not '*ightly* educated. Yet."

"Oh, come, Edward. Don't be down-hearted."

"I got on a bit with Elementary French and Scripture, but all the same, Sir, Mr Myame didn't take me very far."

Mr Whittaker intimated a general agreement.

"Frinstance it would be nice to be a Bang Glark. That's reely respectable. You 'ave your Bang Collar Days. You 'ave promotion. You 'ave a pension. You know where you are. But I'm not educated enough to be a Bang Glark. Even if I went to a *good* college and worked very 'ard, I doubt if I could qualify in time. . . .

"Then there's Lower Division Civil Service. That's safe. You go on to a pension. If I worked 'ard. I'm only thirteen. If I was to work 'ard for that. . . .

"Then there's London Matriculation. That's 'ard. But the gentleman in the lib'ry said it was a good thing to work for. It opens all sorts of *avenues*, 'e said. . . ."

Jim Whittaker allowed Edward Albert to unfold his discreet but ignoble conception of life. It appeared to him that before Edward Albert died he was likely to be despised and detested by quite a number of people. So there was no reason to detest the poor sniffy little beast here and now. All in good time. The Firm had always rather underpaid old Tewler and it had to do its duty by his son, whether it liked him or not.

And it did its duty. It acceded to his strong desire to embark upon a life of miscellaneous mental improvement in that Imperial College of Commercial Science in Kentish Town, and it made an attempt to get him housed and fed according to his condition.

## CHAPTER II

### *Introducing Doober's*

YOUNG MATTERLOCK, a counting-house clerk of thirty-two, was charged to deal with this responsibility. A boarding-house which offered opportunities for conversation

and companionship seemed to be indicated. He found such establishments rare in Kentish Town. There it was mostly lodging-houses. But when one went south and east, he found boarding-houses in an enormous abundance with the utmost variety of charges, customs, habits and clients. London was a great centre for students of every sort and colour, and for every sort and colour boarding-houses had adapted themselves. It was a museum of nationalities, a kaleidoscope of broken-off social fragments. The difficulty was to find a boarding-house that was just simply a boarding-house.

It did not occur to young Matterlock as anything extraordinary that in all this vast wilderness of lodgings and boarding-houses, not one had ever been planned and built as a lodging-house or boarding-house. Every one had been built to accommodate an imaginary and quite impossible family of considerable means and insanitary habits, with cheap abject servants packed away in the attics and basement, a dining-room, a drawing-room, a parlour and the like. The ground landlords, the architects and builders of the period seem to have been incapable of any other idea. Not ten per cent of these hopeful family residences were ever occupied by that vanishing English family ; the rest were sub-divided into "floors" from the first, and nearly all of them, even the family houses, were furnished with faded and mis-fitting second-hand furniture. With a plentiful lack of imagination, nineteenth-century England had shaped its conduct and future to the forms of an obsolete social dream.

Thackeray has embalmed for ever this particular phase in our decadent and commercialised feudalism for the student of social history. Our concern is wholly and solely with Edward Albert, and it is not for us to speculate here, now that London and most of our other big cities such as they were, have been knocked to pieces, how far England may presently reveal a quickened and creative mind, how far it will still continue to be an unchangeable, unimaginative mother or how far it may lapse into an unpicturesque decay of muddle and misfits. . . .

Doober's, to which young Matterlock finally entrusted Edward Albert, had a fairly handsome façade in Bendle

Street, just south of the Euston Road. Its official name of Scartmore House was painted in resolute lettering across its brow. Young Matterlock had inspected it and made the necessary arrangements beforehand. Then he had collected Edward Albert, with a tin box, a cricket bat, an outgrown overcoat and a new portmanteau, from the school, and brought him in a slow, sure four-wheeler to his new habitation.

"I think you'll find it a very nice homely place," he said on the way. "Mrs Doober who runs it seems a thoroughly good sort. She'll introduce you to people and make you feel at home. You'll soon get used to it. If you fall upon any difficulties you know my address. Your money will come every Saturday from Hooper's office and you'll pay the bill that day. The balance over you ought to find enough for clothes, college fees and running expenses. If you're careful you can manage. You can't be too careful."

Edward Albert made a responsive noise to that familiar phrase.

"I think you ought to get your clothes made to measure. Those cheap ready-mades of Myame's make you look even worse than you need do. I think Mrs Doober or some one will find you some sort of tailor round the corner. Bespoke tailors I think they call them. You see *this* doesn't sit on your shoulders, and your sleeve's so short it shows too much of your wrists. Wrists aren't exactly your strong point, Tewler. . . . Well, here we are!"

Mrs Doober opened the door, beaming and being as thoroughly a good sort as she knew how. Behind her hovered the current slavey summoned to help with the luggage.

The "Hall" of Scartmore House, that is to say its passage entrance, testified that Doober's was reasonably and miscellaneous full. The place had a dingy but nutritious smell, and was toned by oil-cloth and marbled paper to a pale mellow brown. Colour and odour blended together. A row of hat and coat pegs sustained a selection of outer garments above an extensive range of umbrellas and sticks. There was a large hall-stand with a fly-blown mirror and racks for letters and papers.

Largely occluding this mellow background was Mrs

Doober's receptive personality. "And this is our young gentleman?" said she. "A student. We'll do all we can to make you comfortable. You're not the only student, you'll find. There's young Mr Frankincense from University College. Such a *clever* young man—the *highest* honours!—and we've got a great teacher of elocution, Mr Harold Thump, and his lady, and a young Indian gentleman."

She whispered confidentially closer to young Matterlock. "The son of a rajah. He speaks English beautifully."

She shot an aside at the slavey. "Number thirteen. If they're too heavy, take them up one at a time. . . . Well then, ask Gawpy to help you. Don't stand there helpless."

She restored her amiability as she turned back to her clients.

Edward Albert listened confusedly. He was doing his best to keep his unfortunate wrists up his sleeves, and he had already acquired a habit of inaccurate attention that would last his lifetime. "We're a young household," she was saying. "There's only one really *old* gentleman among us and *he's* charming. Such *good* stories! . . ."

He felt the pressure of young Matterlock's hand upon his shoulder. "You'll be all right. You'll feel a little strange at first but you'll soon settle down to it."

"Belgians. A family of refugees from Antwerp. So if you want to learn French. . . ."

"So it's good-bye and good luck, Tewler." Matterlock was shaking his hand. And leaving him!

Edward Albert had a wild desire to cry out, "Oh, don't *leave* me," and bolt after his protector before the door closed. Then he was alone with Mrs Doober. Her propitiatory manner was now faintly tinged with proprietorship.

"I must show you our common rooms and explain a few of our rules and regulations—because there must *be* rules and regulations, you know—and then I will take you up to your own apartment. Just a quiet little room it is," she said, and then added informatively, "upstairs. It's number thirteen. I hope you won't mind that. I've sometimes thought of changing it to 12A. But I never have. I do so hope you'll

like it all. We're all such friends—it's just like one big family. You must hang up your hat and coat on that peg. . . ."

And in this manner Edward Albert entered upon a fresh phase in his life and adapted himself discreetly to a new and wider environment. Breakfast was from half-past seven to half-past nine. Then you were supposed to go out and return about six or seven. (But one old gentleman was asleep before the fire in the drawing-room. He woke up, stared for a moment, grunted, and then composed himself for further slumber.) Dinner was from seven-thirty to nine-thirty. There was a large dingy dining-room with shaded gas lamps, a big side-board, a service lift that came up with a rumble and a smack, and a sort of backward extension to a little sitting-room behind, and on the first floor there was a diffused drawing-room which had once been bisected by folding doors, with armchairs and corners more or less appropriated by books, pieces of knitting, shawls and the like, two fireplaces and a snugger with two card tables, a chess table, and a sofa at the back. And so upstairs, where Edward Albert was left to unpack, put his things away in a chest of drawers, and spend a long time studying his wrists in the little looking-glass and meditating upon the possibilities of bespoke clothes. If he had long cuffs ; if he got one of those new up and then down collars like what Mr Matterlock wore ; if he pulled himself up—so. And a dark suit with a touch of blue in it and creased trousers like Mr Matterlock's. Which fitted. Then it would be different? . . .

They looked at him at the dinner table when Mrs Doober brought him down—she had to bring him down. They didn't say so very much to him, but they peeped and looked at him all the time. (He would get those cuffs to-morrow.) People came and went with an extraordinary assurance. Afterwards in the drawing-room a lady said, "You're a new arrival?" and he said "Yes, Mam." "And what's your name?" she said, and he told her quite friendly like, and then he got into a corner and affected to read a very nice book, *A Guide to the Hotels of Europe*, while he watched his fellow boarders unobtrusively.

## CHAPTER 12

*Mr Harold Thump*

SOME of the happy family of Scartmore House Edward Albert got to know quite soon. Some remained remote. For a time Mr Harold Thump dominated all the other individualities in this new world. He was, Mrs Doober had explained, "a teacher of elocution and a reciter ; and such a buoyant man ", large, round and rosy, with a lot of fair hair and large, watery, blue eyes ; he rubbed his hands together and breathed with a gusto whenever he thought of it ; sometimes he forgot himself and lapsed into a coma ; but when the spirit was in him he went about Doober's like a brass band. He sang in the bathroom like a choir coming home from a heavily liquidated bean-feast. He saluted everybody by name as he encountered them. He always brightened up for a new arrival.

" Ah, a new recruit to the Select Company ! " he said, at his first sight of Edward Albert, who, on his second night, had come down to dinner rather early, so as not to be brought down by Mrs Doober, and cooed over as he came down. " Young I perceive you are, but you'll grow out of it. Tell me your name, laddie. . . .

" Now tell me, my young friend, have you heard the latest story about the zoo ? About the monkey and the little fretful porcupine ? "

He was addressing himself to Edward Albert. Edward Albert was being asked whether he had heard the story of the monkey and the little fretful porcupine.

" No, Sir," he said brightly.

" It was such a *leetle* monkey," said Mr Thump, and then in a whisper, " *Blue*. You've seen them—*blue* ? "

" Yes, Sir." He hadn't exactly, but he could imagine it.

Whereupon Mr Thump's face changed and became marvellous. He lifted a flat hand as who should say, " You wait ! " His lips tightened. His eyes became very round, he projected

his face. He seemed to be scrutinising every corner of the room for some hostile hearer. "It's such a *vulgar* story," he said in a stage whisper, confidentially. He reduced Edward Albert to a state of tension. He stood up and looked over the top of the lamp. What was he looking for there? There couldn't be anything there. Edward Albert began to giggle. Mr Thump, much encouraged, leant forward to look behind the door.

Then suddenly he affected to think of under the table. He went down to look underneath. Edward Albert's giggle became uncontrollable. Mr Thump looked at him dubiously and went underneath again. Then he came up questioningly, with only the upper part of his face, shining, grave, doubtful, confidential. "Eh?" he said, and put his finger to his lips.

It was too funny.

Then the lady came in, the lady who had said, "You're a new arrival?" the night before.

She took her place at the table. She affected to ignore Mr Thump. You might infer she did not like him.

Mr Thump, very absurdly, ignored her upon strictly parallel lines. Ridiculous it was.

"Not now," he said. "No. Never do."

Other people dropped in, Mrs Doober and a rather severe-looking blonde young lady. With each arrival Mr Thump featured a deepening hopelessness, and Edward Albert's delight in his frustration increased. Plainly the story was becoming more and more impossible. Mr Thump would start at every fresh arrival and throw up his eyes in comic despair. Always when no one but Edward Albert was looking. The others were beginning to notice Edward Albert's uncontrollable hilarity. They suspected him. What was he laughing at? Then they suspected Mr Thump. Thereupon Mr Thump became more suspicious than anyone. He was a fair *treat*.

He addressed Edward Albert protestingly. He spoke in a low plaintive voice. "I only said a porcupine, you know, a very *leetle* porcupine. What is there to laugh at in a porcupine?"

His features had an instantaneous fit and then became very sad.

Edward Albert devoured bread hastily and a crumb went the wrong way.

"Just a porcupine!" said Thump in a broken falsetto.  
"Oh! Oh! Oh!"

"You've set that boy laughing!" said Mrs Doober, "and I doubt if he'll get any dinner. Gawpy, take him away and help him. It's a shame of you, Mr Thump."

"I never set him laughing. He started laughing at me. All I said, Mrs Doober, was this; I asked him if he knew the story of the monkey and the porcupine."

"Well," said the elderly man who had been sleeping before the drawing-room fire in the afternoon. "What is this precious story of the monkey and the porcupine? If it's fit to tell here."

"How should *I* know?" said Mr Thump, now in his glory. "If I knew, would I ask a little chap like that?"

"You mean to say there isn't a story?"

"Not that I know of. No. Why should there be? I've been asking about it for years. From the way he laughed I really thought he had got something. . . ."

The old gentleman grunted in a hostile manner.

"One of your Artful Catches, Mr Thump," said Mrs Doober. "I shall fine you, if you do any more of them. . . ." Then changing the subject; "Our Belgian friends are late to-night. . . ."

Mr Thump aired his voice for a few tuneful bars and then caught his wife's eye and desisted. "Hm!" said Mr Thump, and sank back into insignificance.

When Albert Edward returned to the dining-room watery-eyed and still slightly hysterical, the Belgians had come in and the table talk had drifted away to other subjects, so that he never learnt that the great story of the monkey and the procupine was merely selling a bargain. Immediately his eye sought Mr Harold Thump's and was rewarded by a sympathetic grimace.

In this way a curious mental dependence was established

between Mr Thump and himself. They reassured one another. They convinced each other that they existed.

When Mr Thump came into one of the reception rooms and everybody else behaved as though they had nothing against him very much except that they had had quite enough of him some time ago, he would look for Edward Albert and be sure of finding a bright expectant face. And Edward Albert, coming discreetly into a company to which, except for Mrs Doober's official encouragements, he seemed invisible and unaudible, would find Harold Thump ready with a grimace for him and just that sly obliquity of vision in it that made them both fellow-conspirators against their fellow-boarders.

"*They* don't exist," they told each other mutely. "*We* exist."

## CHAPTER 13

### *Intimations of Empire*

BEHIND the florid personality of Mr Harold Thump, other individuals advanced and retreated. There was that other student, young Frankincense from University College, who had won so many honours. He was slender and tall, surmounted by a pear-shaped head with the broad part upward, and he came to Edward Albert and said, "I gather you too are a scholarship holder?"

"Not exactly a scholarship holder," said Edward Albert. "I'm studying at the Imperial College of Commercial Science in Kentish Town. Civil Service and all that."

"Oh God!" cried Mr Frankincense in undisguised contempt, and turned away, and never afterwards approached him.

Whereupon a profound hatred for Mr Frankincense was born in Edward Albert's soul, and it troubled him profoundly that he could devise no way of getting square with him. In reveries he called him Turnip Head, and cut him

out with a particularly beautiful but non-existent young lady, with whom he was desperately enamoured. In this Edward Albert's new tailor-made suit played its part. But Frankincense paid little attention to these profound humiliations, since he knew nothing whatever about them.

Edward Albert would see him playing chess in the snuggery and particularly with the Indian young gentleman, who looked like one of the Bolter's College Old Boys, only more so, and who spoke in a high-pitched clear staccato manner that filled Edward Albert with a strange sense of superiority, more particularly when he learnt from old Mr Blake that this way of talking was "chi-chi" and characteristic of the lesser breeds within the law who inhabit Hindustan. He was part of Edward Albert's Indian Empire, and as for his being a somebody because he was a Rajah's son, said old Mr Blake, "these rajahs have dozens of 'em. Hareems they have, and they tax the skins off their people to keep them up and then blame us for it. Four wives and a lot of concubines and then some. Rajah's son he may be in India, but over here he's nothing more than a blasted bastard. But to hear him argue at times you would think we'd robbed India of her cotton trade and every sort of wealth they ever had. . . . Hareems is *their* factories, and whatsoever wealth they get, they'll produce more mouths to eat it up, trust *them*. Why, when I see him talking to a nice blonde English girl like Miss Pooley, and giving himself airs with her, it fair makes my blood boil. Out there she'd be a Mem Sahib and he'd be salaaming to her. . . ."

Edward Albert, as a prospective citizen of the British Motherland would listen to his subject from afar, watch the sinister movements of his long hands, and resent his shrill laugh of delight when he gained any advantage over Turnip Head, who after all *was* an Englishman, and who ought to know better than to lose games of chess to his political inferior. You cannot be too careful. At any time there might be another Mutiny, if once we lost our grip on them.

And in his reveries he would deal with his subject races very firmly. Sadly and sternly he would blow them from guns,

because that was what they dreaded most. It affected their resurrection in some way. He revived his fantasy of an electric gun that never required re-loading, and with it he fought his way through hordes and hordes of turbaned rebels, mowing them down by the Fousand, literally by the Fousand, to rescue the foolish Turnip Head—just in time.

There the man was, hemmed in, his ammunition running short, awaiting the fate of all those who pander to the treacherous natives, yet, let this be said for him, holding out to the last, and then he heard the bagpipes. Softly in his own peculiar manner, Edward Albert whistled that inspiring tune, "The Campbells are Coming."

He advanced along a nullah, because, whatever it may be, a nullah is what you always advance along in India, shooting right and left.

Then he discovered he was sitting quite close to the Indian rebel. . . .

Edward Albert didn't care if he *had* heard. . . .

## CHAPTER 14

### *Do Belgians Speak French?*

ANOTHER stimulus to the patriotic consciousness of Edward Albert was those newly arrived Belgian refugees from Antwerp, always sitting together in a bunch, watchful to behave well, and talking of their affairs and hopes with the utmost freedom, to anyone whom on the slightest provocation they imagined might understand their French. In a little while the Germans would be driven out of Belgium again and they would return. Miss Pooley and the widow lady who had first spoken to Edward Albert really did have a working knowledge of French, and so it fell to them to hear and hand on their account of what in those milder days were regarded as the horrors of war.

They seemed pretty dreadful then to everyone. Antwerp

had been shelled and scores of civilians had been killed. One story was of a human shoulder-blade lying in the street far away from the heap of clothes and the pool of blood that had once been its body, and the other was of a man who just stepped out on a balcony to see what was happening.

His wife called out to him to come in for his coffee, and, getting no answer, went out to find him—headless !

That sort of thing. It was strange to listen to people who could not speak three words of English talking so freely and quickly in their own difficult tongue.

Harold Thump was disposed to be critical of those Belgians from the first, and cast a doubt, some indefinite sort of doubt, upon them. They constituted a rival attraction and he could not bear it. He would make a humorous face and discover Edward Albert was not looking at him. He tried to recover that attention by affecting to jump and be alarmed at Monsieur Harcourt's more emphatic gestures, and watching him with extreme caution and looking round at him suddenly, as if he was something that might explode at any moment. This succeeded partially. But only partially.

Because Tewler was listening most of the time for bits of Elementary French and hoping against hope that he might be able to cut in. But it was just gabble, gabble, so that at times he doubted if it really was French at all.

Never once did he hear of *Lar mair, ler pair*, that ever-present *tante*, the gardener, the books of my uncle, the house that is ours, the dog, the cat, and all that curious world which pullulates round and round and round the foundations laid for the French language in English.

Did these Belgians really speak *good* French ? There was talk fostered by Mrs Doober of everybody having French lessons now while they had the opportunity. But you cannot be too careful. Edward Albert, listening attentively, heard Monsieur Harcourt say, whenever he was interrupted, "*Comment ?*" Now that wasn't the proper French for "*What*", which was what he was trying to say. The proper French for "*What*" is "*Quoi*". "*Comment*" means "*How*". In Elementary French it does, anyhow, because it said so in the

vocabulary at the end of his French Primer. And anyhow he wasn't going to be taught French if he wasn't to be taught French in English, and the Harcourts had no English. No fear !

So it was that Edward Albert became one of that vast majority of humanity who, after courses and examinations and certificates and so forth in French, are still unable to speak or understand or even read a dozen words in that language. When at long last, if ever—for the outlook for civilisation seems still very uncertain—when the history of the human mind comes to be written, it will be noted incidentally that from first to last throughout the earth, in the course of the centuries, some billions of people—using “billions” in the English and not the American sense—“learnt French” and still remained entirely uncontaminated. The vast edifice of things the world has been “taught” and which yet remained unknown ! Whackings, keepings-in, yells and insults, forced competitions, bogus examinations, sham graduations, gowns, hoods and honours, a vast parade of learning. And what have we got ?

The world knows little as yet of what it owes to its teachers. But it is beginning to suspect.

It did glimmer at times in Edward Albert's dim and now rapidly closing mind that in some hidden way a certain number of people “got the hang of” this French. It wasn't *all* a bluff.

He watched Miss Pooley closely. She wasn't just pretending to understand and making up a story. She really did appear to be understanding and to be saying things that were understood.

Anyhow, Edward Albert reflected, he didn't intend ever to *talk* French. So why worry ? He wanted it, if he wanted it at all, only for examination purposes, and that was that. Nevertheless——

## CHAPTER 15

*Things He Missed*

IT added to the vagueness due to his growing habit of inattention to anything that did not immediately concern him, that there was a real element of mystery about the occupations of nearly all his fellow-boarders during the middle part of the day. It never dawned upon Edward Albert from first to last that Mr Harold Thump was living almost entirely on the earnings of his wife. The fiction that she was engaged in some literary work of an exalted sort veiled the fact that she managed an ill-ventilated dressmaking workroom in Shaftesbury Avenue with considerable harshness and success. Harold Thump sat about in the parks in fine weather or repaired to Selfridge's extremely hospitable new premises in Oxford Street when it was cold or wet, or he watched the world go by at some railway station, alert for any conversation that might lead to a lesson in voice production or an invitation to a sing-song. Or if he was in a state of financial elation, he would drift to the Hippodrome corner, and there exchange drinks and reminiscences of success, with various kindred spirits who gathered there, the " Boys ", the ripe characters, the good Old Guard. That way he sometimes heard of opportunities, though they were usually opportunities that fled too quickly to be grasped. But Edward Albert imagined a different picture altogether of his off-stage hours. He thought of a great classroom and Harold leading a large resonant chorus.

*Harold : " Oorl the Woorrld's a Stay-je."*

*Chorus in thunderous unison :*

**" Oorl the Woorrld's a Stay-je."**

It did not dawn upon Edward Albert that the young lady from Harley Street, *Miss Pooley*, whose Christian name was part of her personal reserve, was not a distinguished medical practitioner but the young lady who made appointments for an oculist and stood by helpfully to hand him the various lights, mirrors, spectacle frames, needed in his practice, or that

bitter old Mr Blake, who displayed so vivid a hatred and contempt for every prominent scientific reputation, because, it seemed, they appropriated the work that far better men did for them, was in fact a decaying laboratory assistant from University College.

Nor did our hero ever realise that the quiet genteel widow who was constantly referring to "my friend Lady Tweedman"—that Lady Tweedman who "used to say" so many authoritative and quenching things about social behaviour—disappeared so suddenly from Doober's because, after repeated warnings, she had been caught red-handed shoplifting. The magistrate made an example of her. He swept Lady Tweedman aside. "If this Lady Twiddlum (oh, Tweedman, did you say? Tweedman) can answer for your character, why isn't she here to do so?"

Edward Albert heard Mrs Doober say "Kleptomania" to Miss Pooley, but it meant nothing to him. Suddenly the widow was not, and dear Lady Tweedman was heard of no more. And he pursued his destiny unobservantly as ever, not missing her.

She was just one less person that you need not listen to.

It took him a long time even to grasp the constitution of Mrs Doober's staff. The chief assistant was a niece of Mr Doober. Mr Doober was "something in the city" that demanded a punctual departure every morning. He was not, as a matter of fact, a company director or a stockbroker. He was an office cleaner and hall porter, and he changed into a green baize apron for duty.. But he resumed his social importance as he removed the green apron and made his way home, and Edward Albert never found him out. He talked, but little, and that mostly of stocks and shares. His advice on promising lock-ups and sound investments was invariably sound. Old Mr Blake, who hunted a small nest egg from nest to nest in search of something called capital appreciation, was guided by him entirely.

Then there was Gawpy. Gawpy was a cousin who had lent her savings to Mrs Doober and acquired a half share in the concern, but as it was impossible for Mrs Doober ever to pay her back, and as she had nowhere else to go, she remained

as a general utility, to hold on to and live by her invested bit of money as long as it lasted. To Edward Albert and the rest of the boarders she was just Gawpy, something in the nature of things, like the milkman or atmospheric pressure. You took her for granted. You could not imagine what life would be without her. You asked her for everything and she always got you something more or less.

The rebellious unstable slaveys came and went.

One of them passing Edward Albert on the stairs, addressed him cheerfully in language so filthy and familiar that he could not believe his ears. She grinned back at him over her shoulder and supplemented her words by an even more obscene and incredible gesture. "Leaving my dear!" she said. "Ain't it a pity?" He remained aghast on the stair-case. Very slowly he crept on up to his room. It couldn't have happened. Such things couldn't happen. Anyhow she was leaving.

After that he remained uncomfortably aware of slaveys. He kept his eye on them, hesitated, and fled their approach.

Whenever Doober's had rooms to spare a card was put into the ground floor window, and there would be transients for three or four days or perhaps a week. Sometimes they looked odd enough to dislike. If they were alone, they read. If there were several of them they sat and muttered in corners. Sometimes they played strange card games. Nobody took any notice of them unless it was to pass the time of day. Except Gawpy, who would chat to them about the sights of London and the buses and the Underground. Or anything else they seemed disposed to talk about. . . .

## CHAPTER 16

### *Boy Into Man*

IN this setting it was that Edward Albert Tewler began that series of studies, trials, efforts and inquiries that constituted the basic side of his metamorphosis, his wakening to the need of getting a living and finding a place for himself in

the great swaying organism of adult human life. He was too young to be affected very seriously by the First World War of 1914-18. After the first excitement of being at war, that wider interest faded. He had not acquired the newspaper habit. He celebrated Armistice Day as the triumphant realisation that "we", the British, had won, as ever, and he ceased to have any sort of international consciousness thereafter. He was, as we shall tell later, quite surprised by the war in 1939.

He set himself with great gravity to his studies in that Kentish Town College. He had a serious discussion with the Principal about his prospects. The idea of a bank clerkship seemed hopeless, and the Principal was by no means so convinced of the value of the London Matriculation as the Camden Town librarian. "It's pretty stiff, you know. Three languages. There's Latin, French, and either Greek or German."

"German's Greek to me," said Edward Albert.

"And it's not much in itself unless you're going to be a teacher.

"But what *I* should do, if I were you," said the Principal, "is to take our special course of Business Method for our own Certificate of Proficiency. There are one or two business organisations, 'North London Leaseholds' for example, that practically take all their clerical staff from us on our certificate. We charge a slight commission when you are placed. There you get something certain. The pay isn't high, I admit, but the hours aren't bad, nine to one and two to six, and then you could come here for more advanced work in our evening classes, and have a shot at the Lower Division Civil Service or something of that sort. . . ."

That seemed a sound, safe proposition to Edward Albert and he accepted it. He gained his Certificate of Proficiency at the second attempt and was presently handed over to North London Leaseholds, and after that he went on with a variety of evening classes, and never got anywhere or did anything further. Nothing whatever. His objectives wavered continually.

He became a perennial student. He sat in the backs of

ecture theatres not even trying to keep up with what was going on. Generally he began with a certain mental resistance to the lecturer, which deepened into something very like detestation as the course flowed on. "How does *he* know?" he would ask himself, "and, anyhow he needn't give himself the airs he does. I expect there's others could make all his blab blab look pretty small if they chose. Wish I'd never joined up for this Rot. Worse than the last, it is." If he had known of any way of putting out his tongue at those lecturers invisibly, he would certainly have done so.

Among other subjects, he attended classes in Elizabethan Literature, Botany, English Prose Composition, Elementary Latin, Political Economy, Agricultural Science, Geology, Geometrical Drawing and Greek Art. But whatever possibility his mind had had of deliberate concentration was rapidly diminishing now under the pressure of those intense pre-occupations with which we shall deal in the next chapter.

When he was just over one-and-twenty a wonderful thing happened to him, one of his reveries was more than realised; he came in for money. He inherited an estate of some of the very worst slum-property in Edinburgh, which finally realised a capital of between nine and ten thousand pounds. His maternal uncle had died intestate and he was the sole next of kin. He had no idea of the magnitude of the old man's hoard. That dawned upon him by degrees. His idea of a legacy was a "undred pounds". At first he thought the whole thing might be a joke of Harold Thump's, but the postmark was Edinburgh right enough. He consulted Mrs Doober, Mr Doober, Colebrook and Mahogany, and the College Lecturer in Constitutional Law. They all took it seriously and gave valuable advice.

So he got a week's leave in anticipation of his customary ten days' holidays from his North London Leaseholds job, and went off to Scotland to see about it all. All his advisers seemed to expect more than that "cool hundred".

"A cool fousand, then," he had tried.

"It might be more than that," said Mr Doober. "Much more than that."

Edward Albert's expectations expanded. Endless reveries had prepared his mind for some such good fortune. He was elated but not intoxicated when he began to realise the extent and nature of his windfall. He displayed an unsuspected business shrewdness. "I can't manage that property, as you say ; it has to be somebody on the spot, and if there's people ready to buy I'm ready to sell. What I want is mortgages, first mortgages, scattered about, for you can't be too careful. I know a bit about mortgages ; I bin a mortgagee for years. And I'd like if I can to have it all done by Hooper and Kirkshaw and Hooper—you know, Sir Rumbold Hooper."

Whereupon the people in Edinburgh became excessively respectful and distributed his fortune carefully and righteously, and Edward Albert came back to London in a real first-class carriage, with tremendously padded blue seats and white lace for your head and hot water pipes and everything, whistling softly to himself and torn between a desire to tell everybody about his legacy and a determination not to let anybody know too much about it.

His reveries were confused and exciting. You will hear more about them in the next Book. He foresaw nothing, but on that return journey he anticipated a good deal. Nothing he anticipated happened. That something which figures so largely in heavy classical discourses upon Greek Tragedy, "*ἀνάγκη*", seems to have been on the same train and to have followed him post haste to Scartmore House.

From this point onward Mr James Whittaker and Mr Myame faded unobtrusively out of Edward Albert's life and in consequence out of our story. "It takes the lousy little beast right off our hands, and that's that," said Mr James Whittaker, and never gave him another thought. Those are his last words in our drama.

Mr Myame's formal exit had occurred already.

The winding-up of his trusteeship had been accomplished with the utmost correctness and formality by Hooper and Kirkshaw and Hooper. The mortgage was being paid off with regularity and the good man's accounts were

entirely in order. The transition occurred without a jolt. A residuum of a thousand pounds remained undisturbed for some years by dignified mutual consent.

Such was Mr Myame's formal exit. But something of him hung about in dreamland to the very end of Edward Albert's days.

Mr Myame had figured in a string of religious nightmares during a phase of dyspepsia and influenza following upon a revivalist sermon Edward Albert had been miraculously induced to hear by a sudden shower of rain. "Strait is the gate," tenored the revivalist, "and narrow is the way!" — the very first words Edward Albert heard. How many times had he not called Mr Myame *narrow*? Narrow is the way. You cannot be too careful. Hell is on either side.

With these rapid confusions of identity natural in dreamland, Mr Myame would be at one moment himself and at another his own just and terrible God, who, according to the best Christian authorities, had created a world of sinners in order to hunt it remorselessly to a hell of everlasting torture. This amiable Divinity overhung him, pouring coals of Jupiter upon him out of a kind of cornucopia scuttle. Edward Albert screamed noiselessly in the dreamland way. He awoke rigid with horror and for days his soul was black with spiritual dismay.

He dreaded bedtime and those God-ridden hours.

There was nothing to be done about them, except live through them. You can't give up going to bed. And gradually they were pushed out of his consciousness by returning health and the steady onset of that other dominant system of urgencies in the human metamorphosis, the convergent factors of the sexual drive. That too shall be told with the same disinterested integrity that we have observed hitherto, at any cost to the lingering illusions and natural modesty of reader and writer alike.

## BOOK THE THIRD

# THE MARRYING, DIVORCE AND EARLY MIDDLE AGE OF EDWARD ALBERT TEWLER

### CHAPTER I

#### *Species Homo Tewler*

I AM telling the simple life story of one individual Londoner, and I am pledged not to stray from a plain objective narrative ; nevertheless it has already been necessary to supplement this record of acts and deeds by statements of a more general nature, to place the story definitely in its historical perspective. Just as if you are making a deposition about murder on the high seas you have, if possible, to indicate the latitude and longitude of the ship. It has been necessary, for instance, to indicate the rôle of the feudal and Christian traditions, if the story is to be read understandingly by an enlightened American or Russian or Chinese reader, or to have any value for that posterity to which, under the restrictions of the present paper shortage, it is mainly addressed. And now furthermore in one brief but concentrated section we must broaden our reference wider still and show not merely Tewler in terms of terrestrial latitude and longitude but Tewler in relation to the starry universe, to space and time and ideals. . . .

We have already called attention to the general nature of the *Metamorphosis* through which Edward Albert passed out of his tadpole stage. We must expand a little more on that, because it explains why his love life, as we may call it, was widely different in its nature from the simple, concentrated, exciting and even beautiful romanticism, which the literature of our present social order is preserving for the inspiration of posterity.

In the plays and novels of that now rapidly vanishing past,

from which, like people who have been salvaged from a severely bombed city, we are emerging stunned and uncertain ; in that literature, I say, the characters are definitely described as being " in love with " so and so. This being " in love " is a specific concentration of desire and affection upon the " object ", who is always of the opposite sex, and it excludes all other interests. The character " falls " into it. It is presented as the common quality of all the humanity that is fit to print. A rake is a person in whom this state of mind is less enduring than usual, but when he is in it, he is in it as simply and entirely as a really good man. And most villains are made villains through scorned and unrequited love. The tragedies of life are when A is in love with B and B on the contrary loves C or anyhow does not return A's love. The dark side of love comes up when B, for mercenary reasons, pretends to be in love with A. And further B may love C unknowingly when believing himself or herself to be in love with A. Moreover, there was a process, exactly parallel to religious conversion, when B " learnt to love " A, or gradually fell out of love with A and into love with C. Around this primary system of adult loves were grouped equally firm and invariable loves—of mothers, of sons and daughters.

Just as hardly anyone in that idealistic past, believed his religion, which was really far too complex and artificial for any human brain to understand and believe, but only liked to believe he believed it, so the worthy generation into which Edward Albert was born liked to believe it had a simple, explicable, and generally acceptable " love life ". In each case there was a fundamental falsification of reality. The story our progenitors told was not how they were actually behaving. It was just how they wanted to believe they behaved.

But why did they all, Edward Albert included, distort reality like that ?

The normal human being, you may have observed, has a passion for autobiography. You have it yourself. If you deny it indignantly, that means merely that you have it in its more passive form. I have told you something that you resent because it does not tally with the story about yourself that you

tell yourself. This passion becomes oppressively manifest, for instance, in fellow-travellers on ships, whose minds have been relaxed by a flux of strangers at leisure, and it is particularly evident in general conversation in America. At bottom every American seems to be in a state of wonder at his own high and profound motivation, and as anxious to make himself believe it all as to convince you.

And this is natural enough, and was to be expected, because the riddles of human conduct are far more difficult than those of any other animal. The onrush of social life has come to this lonely-spirited ape, for that is what we still are fundamentally, at headlong speed, through a conspiracy of inventions and devices, in a few thousand generations, and he has found himself involved with an ever-expanding multitude of fellow-citizens, whom he is disposed to fear and to hate and to get the better of in almost equal measure.

This is no mere theorising, or it would be quite out of place here. This is simply a repetition in general terms of the case of Edward Albert Tewler as it has been put before you in the preceding two books, unobtrusively for the most part, but with an outbreak of explicitness in Book the Second, Chapter Three. It is the case of *Homo Tewler*, which includes all of us—*Homo sapiens* existing as yet only in the dreamlands of aspiration. This poor uncomfortable creature is continually doing its best to make a plausibly consistent story of its behaviour both to itself and the social world about it, and to be guided by that legend so as to escape an open breach with its environment. The urgency we are under to pull ourselves together and make an acceptable account of ourselves finds its outlet in these yarns about religious experience and consistent love that we force upon one another at every opportunity.

So it has been since the ancestral Tewler, (*Pithecanthropus Tewler*) found himself coming down from his nice safe tree nests to the agoraphobia of the ground level and, with the most strenuous suppressions of his primary instincts, living in ever-expanding communities. He wants intensely to say, " You can rely on me to do this. It is quite impossible for

me to do that. But since I am a Moslem you cannot expect me to do that! No healthy Englishman would dream of—”

He says such things to himself, and will hear of no other possibility of conduct outside their scope. The last thing he will do is to admit our common, essential and unavoidable incoherence. He fences himself about with taboos and customs and creeds, and the more energetic sort of people, themselves believing, have been only too ready to assist their weaker brethren and strengthen their own faith, by guiding and controlling them. This is right and lovely, and as for *that*? Oh! you'd *never* do that! The sage, the teacher, the priest, the guru, have kept their fingers pointing steadily away from fact towards the ideal.

And as long as the circumstances of the life of *Homo Tewler* have not changed too rapidly for these guides to accomodate themselves to the new conditions, his societies have been able to get along by clinging to this or that particular compromise with truth, which provided an effective method of co-operation. The co-operation might be imperfect, but it rubbed along.

For long ages *Homo Tewler* managed to pretend that his private imaginations and the more unpleasant realities of his behaviour were not actually there at all, that the misbehaviours of his fellow-creatures were “abnormalities” and lapses which he did not share—“Oh, quite impossible!”—or that they were due to diabolical possession of an exceptional sort. It was only with the advent of psycho-analysis that a complex tangle of fancies and dreams that he had hitherto denied and smuggled away, was dragged out shamefacedly as his “sub-conscious” into an almost too vivid light of day. “What's all *this*?” asked the psycho-analyst, “I'm really surprised at you,” like a conjuror taking a rabbit out of the good man's hair. We all had a sub-conscious, he declared. Every one of us. *No!* But—

We began to remember things we had been in the habit of dismissing from our minds. It was most disconcerting.

Freud and his psycho-analysts suffered from the disadvantages of a classical education, and in their researches

into the concealments of their troubled patients, they found remarkable reminders of the sonorous taboo tragedies of the Greeks. Impressed by the irrational freaks of adverse incidents, and unable to believe the dreadful truth that Nature, pursuing a course as yet undeciphered, cares not a dam for her individual offspring, *Homo Tewler* has always pitted his poor cunning against the Indifference, in the hope of finding lucky and unlucky observances that will compel It to behave and misbehave. Magic was primitive science in practice, and its observance was Taboos. Taboos still rule our minds. We break a Taboo and nothing we believe will arrest the consequences. It is Fate. Scarcely anything will persuade us that Fate doesn't care a rap about it, that the calm of the Indifference is unruffled. We keep on fussing. You mustn't marry your mother-in-law, even if you don't know she is your mother-in-law, or look, like Ham, at your parent's ill-adjusted dress. Oh ! it's just awful for you if you do. If you meet a black cat or three magpies, cross yourself or go home and hide. But these scholar-psychiatrists chose to elevate their Greek classics to a sort of history of the human imagination, and invented (Jung chiefly) a great Oedipus complex, a lesser Electra complex and all the rest of the psycho-analysts' Classical Walpurgis Night, to systematise our mental chaos. With these Fate dramas they entangled the Hebrew idea of original sin, which also manifestly arose out of a legend of a broken taboo and a curse. (You can't be too careful.) Adler, as we shall see later, with his "inferiority complex", came much nearer to the main reality of human imperatives.

A little less of the classics and a trifle more of biology, and the psycho-analysts would have understood that this "sense of sin" of theirs is neither more nor less than the natural discomfort of an imperfectly adapted animal to its environment. It has no more to do with some profound universal conviction of transgression than a coat that is tight under the arms or the wrong spectacles. Now that the environment of *Homo Tewler* has begun to change at a pace and to an extent that would have been absolutely incredible fifty years ago, a ruthless urgency calls upon him to adapt his

mind and his way of living to these vast demands and become *Homo sapiens* indeed, before utter disaster overwhelms him. Can he? And will he? He is much more likely to give way to storms of taboo terrorism, to mutilate and prostrate himself, to seek to propitiate the offended fetishes by violent persecutions, to revert to inquisitions and witch smellings. . . .

At this point the Censor intervenes and objects that if this goes on, our story will cease to be a specific monograph upon Edward Albert Tewler and will become a general dissertation upon human life, which is precisely, says the Censor, what I undertook to avoid. I would dispute that, were I not afraid that the reader would take sides with the Censor. In the Introduction. . . .

But there is no need to wrangle. What I have said I have said. I will revert now to our "specimen" of *Homo Tewler var. Anglicanus* and tell how he lived into the opening phase of our world catastrophe and what he said and did then. I will do my utmost henceforth to stick still more closely to the record of his individual acts and experiences.

Yet I must admit here that I join with Mrs Richard Tewler in deplored the inaudibility of Mrs Humbelay. If only we could have heard those lost trailers of hers, we might have benefited greatly from her unlimited store of obscure and occasionally, what many people might be disposed to consider, obscene wisdom. I could have quoted her and that would have been indisputable story-telling. . . .

It has to be recorded then that Edward Albert never in the whole course of his life really loved or felt honest, generous friendship for any human being such as the codes of our literary tradition require. That demands an amount of deliberate mental synthesis of which his early education and upbringing had already rendered him incapable. How he worked out his own conception of an acceptable religious life has been told. He became a moderate Christian after the fashion of the majority of his fellow-countrymen, occasionally he went to church, some Anglican church, but he rarely did so unless there was nowhere else to go or he had some personal

incentive, and he thought about his religion as little as he could. There it was, like a passport put away in a safe, and you did not bother about it until there was a call for it. Then out it came. "Pass Christian!" ("Them Atheists will look a bit silly!") His sexual development was more confused and complicated than his religious history, it had become entangled with a number of factors in the metamorphosis which were essentially independent of sexual reproduction, and to that greater complex we must now address ourselves.

## CHAPTER 2

### *Purity by Terror*

AMONG the claims made for that ideal life lived in the imaginations of the good folk of the Edwardian age was its Purity. Most people were supposed to be more or less pure, and in the case of the autobiographical type this was stressed very aggressively. I remember being told, on our second day's acquaintance on a liner, by a proud and happy mother, apropos of a rather lumpish son of seventeen or eighteen who may or may not have been just out of earshot, "That boy is still as pure as the driven snow." (I *don't* fink. I saw his face.) But they kept up the make-believe so widely that mostly they did believe that the majority of the people about them who seemed to be leading pure lives were in fact leading pure lives. You have witnessed Mrs Tewler's struggle to keep our hero pure. And here I recall my never to be sufficiently lamented Mrs Humbelay and how she was saying something about forgetting one's dreams and imaginations, when she so unhappily went under the threshold of audibility and was lost to us.

Those people who still seek and profess purity in our harder world must murder and banish memories to a wonderful extent. True that almost all animals forget sexual experiences very readily. That is understandable of animals, who have

their transitory annual rutting, because otherwise the creatures would always be in a state of unseasonable excitement. But man is an unseasonable creature and he does not naturally forget so completely. Consider all our pastors and teachers, and particularly consider the case of Mr Myame. His passion for Purity, for the complete suppression of any thought of an approach to a sexual act, in himself and others, assumed an undeniable frightfulness.

The English-speaking world has altered so rapidly that it is already difficult to believe that before the World War of 1914-18, *The Times* would rather have died of shame than have admitted such words as syphilis or venereal disease to the massive chastity of its columns, and that when that unforgettable heroine, Ettie Rout, came from New Zealand to distribute precautionary packets to the Anzac soldiers, telling them to control themselves if they could but use the packet if they couldn't, the blushing military authorities, men no doubt leading exceptionally holy lives, who imagined that these unpleasant contagions, now rapidly fading out of existence in our franker world, were God's vindictive device to punish impurity in his creatures, did their best to back up their God and suppress her. And Mr Myame, forgetting to his utmost ability, forgetting it may be altogether, or remembering only dimly as one is haunted by a horrible dream, fought as stoutly as the Blimpes of Colonel Blimps in the same losing fight against reality.

So, in accordance with the wishes of the late Mrs Tewler and after a noiseless vigil in the Joseph Hart dormitory, followed by a close inspection of Edward Albert's bed clothes, he called the young man into his study and handed him a serious-looking volume. It was only a few days before Edward Albert became an adder. Mr Myame gave him the book and he charged his account for it. Whether he would have done so after the great shock is an idle speculation. "I want you to read this very very carefully indeed, Tewler," he said. "There are things in this. . . . It is high time you knew them."

Mr Myame paused. "It's a book for your very private

reading. I should be careful not to leave it about or let it fall into the hands of your younger schoolfellows."

The book was entitled Dr Scaber's *What a Young Man Should Know*. It had been, it said in a brief preface, a guide and help to many generations of struggling souls, so that it was at latest Victorian. It had revealed the facts of life frankly and helpfully to them and saved them from terrible dangers. There was no indication of what sort of Doctorate Dr Scaber held, nor indeed any biographical material whatever. Edward Albert read, at first with curiosity and then with a deepening dismay. "Gaw!" he whispered to himself. "You can't be too careful. If only I'd known."

The little book told of the stupendous dangers and horrors of the vicious life in either its social or solitary aspect. The latter it pursued with even greater vehemence than the former. On the heels of those who departed in the least from the path of perfect purity stalked the most frightful forms of suffering and decay, rotting bodies, racking pains, ebbing strength, attenuation, a peculiar expression of face, impotence, imbecility, idiocy, madness. A cold perspiration bedewed the reader's brow.

He had completely forgotten when the thing began with him. It had crept upon him between sleeping and waking.

Now, with a gathering urgency, Nature was at work in Edward Albert, in her own clumsy way inciting him to acts conducive to reproduction. The life cycle of *Homo*, we have already remarked, is far more primitive than that of most other land animals; among other remote ancestral aspects still traceable in his life, the spawning impulse, like the urgencies of creatures who live in warm tropical seas, recurs mensually and not annually. In that briefer rhythm these creatures are stirred up to seek relief for their accumulating milt or spawn. Nature is a sloven, she never cleans up completely after her advances, and so we abound in vestigial structures, and our beings are haunted by the ghosts of rhythms that served her in the past. In the *Hominidae* the ghost of the lunar cycle has materialised again. The solar rut guides us to

St Valentine's Day and the merry merry springtime, but the lunar rut also has revived and is still effective with us. It causes a recurrent uneasiness, we are distraught and nervous, it breaks down control by night and we dream. In some manner relief comes to us and must come. Since man is no longer a tropical amphibian, this necessity for "relief" rarely coincides with the phases of his more elaborate social life. "You might," deliberated Mrs Humbelay, "call it a side issue. And yet it's hardly that, is it? But what there is to make all this fuss about . . .".

"If I pray," stipulated Edward Albert in his distress. But he was beginning to lose whatever confidence he had ever had in the efficacy of prayer. There is often such a whimsicality in His answers, that you cannot be too careful how you invoke Him. All through his teens Edward Albert's mind had black storms of anxiety. Dr Scaber's shadow lay across his mind. He had, it seems, committed that Sin against the Holy Ghost for which there is no forgiveness. Dr Scaber said as much.

Since most of the people in the world about him were maintaining the same silences and concealments as himself, he felt his case was a dark, exceptional one. His dreams, his almost involuntary derelictions were his own peculiar guilty secret. It was not until he was past the age of eighteen that the accumulating effect of chance jests and rude remarks from various acquaintances, led to a dawning realisation that his peculiar uncleanness was neither so rare nor perhaps so heinous as he had supposed. But he was ashamed of it with a slowly fading shame to the very end of his career.

It took still longer for him to realise that there could be any sort of impurity about the female of the species *Homo Tewler*. He would have gratified that mother on the liner by his fantastic ignorance about women. He was as pure as her own dear boy. He never imagined that girls and women too had desires or fantasies—until the crisis of his first married life of which you will be told in due course. The poor dears in those dim religious days, a third of a century ago, were being kept more blankly ignorant about themselves—until terrific

things happened to them—than their brothers. They too peeped and wondered and had their justifiable terrors.

Yet all the time, urged on by implacable Nature, and stimulated rather than repelled by the enormity imposed upon the whole business by the good Dr Scaber, Edward Albert was meanly and furtively trying to know, doing his utmost to know, about It. And also not to let anyone know that he was trying to know. He had extremely little curiosity about women except as the media of It. It was It he was after.

### CHAPTER 3

#### *Peeping and Prying*

PEEPING TOM worked dutifully and regularly in his North London Leaseholds office. In his loose fragments of time, before social relationships began to complicate things, he would more or less consciously obey the urge of Nature to be up and doing about It. He wandered, and almost always he wandered towards the parts of London where there were pictures in windows, where there were undraped statues, where strange women walked about in a provocative way and even said "Ducky" to you. But Dr Scaber had put him wise about *them*. You can get those awful diseases from a kiss, from a split lip.

Until his legacy he could not afford to go to the movies very much and they were mostly heroic and adventurous then, there was kissing, almost too much of it, you joined with other lads of spirit to echo the sounds on the back of your hand, but you never got to anything—anything really instructive.

Gradually he discovered the National Gallery, the South Kensington Museum. They were open on Sunday afternoons. You could wander about whistling softly. You could look sideways. You could be bolder and look straight. Lots of people looked straight without a blush. It was remarkable how nude and yet how coldly uninformative a statue or a picture could be.

Then there was window peeping. His bedroom commanded the windows of the attics of a row of houses giving on Euston Road. There every night people went to bed, and particularly a young woman who, with a certain disregard of her possible visibility, undressed completely in front of a small mirror. By putting out his own light and standing in the dark, he could see her bright pink illuminated body gradually emerging from her clothes. He could see her arms and torso as she combed her hair. By standing on his chair he could see quite a lot of her, but never enough. She yawned. There was just one moment before she pulled her nightgown over her head, and then out went the light.

Still the mystery remained.

Women seemed always to be showing more and more of themselves in those years of relaxation—but never quite enough. But sometimes you seemed to see through their clothes. One evening he was sitting in the drawing-room studying the lingerie advertisements in an illustrated paper, and suddenly he looked up. There was Miss Pooley sitting with her back to him at the writing table. Her soft round neck was revealed by the boyish way her blonde hair was cut, and her dress displayed her clear skin down to the dip between her shoulder blades, and there were the lines of her body as plain as plain, and her bare elbow, and one leg was thrust back. . . .

He could scarcely believe his eyes. There was the top of her stocking and above that three inches of bare smooth shining Miss Pooley before the tight skirt began.

His reaction was extraordinary. He wanted to kill Miss Pooley. He wanted to leap upon her and beat her about and kill her. He had a savage feeling that in some way he was being cheated by her. He couldn't get up for various minor reasons until she went away. Then he threw the illustrated paper aside and retired precipitately to the secrecy of his own room.

## CHAPTER 4

*Assertion*

THIS insane urgency of our mad Mother Nature to make us seek "relief" was not by any means all that was happening to *Homo Tewler* in his metamorphosis. A number of other things, and some of them even more fundamental than this insistence upon unintelligent futile orgasms, were also breaking out in his changing personality.

The tadpole *Homo Tewler* is an abject timid thing, a thing of flight and refuge, but with the metamorphosis into an adult specimen of the *Primates*, quite a new series of later acquisitions break into the gathering personality. The apes, including the *Hominidae*, left the monkeys and lemurs at an early stage and developed along a line of their own, into ego-centred combative creatures with a disposition to own all the universe within sight. Reluctantly *Homo* in his various species, has been forced into an uncongenial social life in the brief course of a million years or so. Yet still his fundamental nature remains. Still he wants to feel successful, masterful, lord and owner of all he surveys, and if he can feel so, he will.

That is something much more persistently present than hunger or lust, which are impulses that can be sated and suppressed for a time. But *Homo* craves for self-assertion and reassurances from the sprouting of his whiskers to his death rattle. It is his natural resistance to the social envelopment that has happened to him, and which continues to restrain his anarchistic disposition. He never forgets about himself, never just grazes on like a sheep or nibbles like a rabbit.

It is unavoidable, and even if the breed of *Homo Tewler* rises presently to a point where it may indeed merit this name it has usurped so prematurely, *Homo sapiens*, this conflict, the moral conflict, the need for education, for being trimmed to fit into social life which is the cause of all religion, will still be in it. It may be controlled, propitiated, diverted and

sublimated, but it will be there. We must not indulge in prophecies and speculation. In this book we are not concerned with that possible but improbable animal, *Homo sapiens*, who may rise indeed in revolt against old Mother Nature and try to wrest his destiny out of her hands. But we are dealing with an animal living far below the intellectual level of any such Satanic revolt. We are concerned with our specimen of *Homo Tewler* and his individual impulse to exist as emphatically as he could in society as he found it.

That amiable philosopher, Adler, dealing with problems of education and general behaviour rather than with sexual aberrations, thrust much of the Freud-Jung psychology into a minor rôle, and concentrated upon what he called the "inferiority complex". But he seems to have thought of it as something to a large extent curable, whereas in truth, with all the social *Hominidæ*, up to and including every living specimen of *Homo Tewler*, great or little or bond or free, it is an integral part of their make-up.

"I exist," says this innate complex, "but do I exist importantly enough? Are these creatures about me getting the better of me, pushing in front of me? This I must not and cannot stand. Do they realise my existence?" This is something over and above every other urgency. It can blend with and pervade the sexual complex. Dogs, other social animals, betray an inferiority complex, but to nothing like the same extent as *Homo*. Edward Albert's hatred of his college teachers and lecturers was one of its manifestations. He detested concerts because he had to sit still while the performers, as he put it, "showed off". He detested most of the people at a concert because they affected a discriminating taste for music and so got away with it. They were Beastly Prigs and so the wound was healed. Few conductors realise the little spots of hatred scattered through the audiences they dominate. Singers particularly, Edward Albert loathed. He would have produced horrible parodies of the sounds they made had he dared. The dear old British B.B.C. at its virtuous outset tried to give the English Tewlers improving doses of classical music. The Tewlers in their millions protested with passion. What

Edward Albert wanted was slave music that ministered to him, so that he could take possession of it, drum with his fingers, jig with his feet, vocalise as it went on, get up and caper, stamp on it. That was a bit of all right.

And at Doober's all the time, Edward Albert and all his kindred Tewlers without a solitary exception, each after his or her manner, sustained a continuous unconfessed struggle to assert themselves. There were differences in finesse and that was all. And the uneasy peace of the establishment was maintained by a continual give and take of resolute pretension and insincere mutual acquiescence.

Thackeray was a novelist with a strange impulse towards truth-telling, and he wrote for a public that had to be propitiated and could be propitiated by the bare-faced flattery of inviting them to share his amusement at the foibles of other people. His *Book of Snobs*, broadened out, embraced his unsuspecting public and himself and all mankind, and showed our universal effort to escape from insignificance.

[But here a reader protests, quite a nice contented reader, with a twinkle in her eye. "Not *quite* universal," she pleads. "There are people of good breeding who *can* be absolutely unpretentious. I admit the struggle. Nowadays one sees it all about one. In a time of shifting values, when no one knows his place, there is a vast amount of pushing and pretending. Some of it is quite ridiculous. I can't help being amused. I laugh to myself. But so far as I am concerned, none of these things make the slightest difference to me. I can assure you. I'm just simply myself with everyone."

To which the only possible reply is : "Exactly, Madam."]

The development of self-assertion in Edward Albert's mind throughout his teens was by no means confined to such simply negative reactions as his hatred of lecturers, classical music and singers. He was giving increased attention to the effectiveness of his personal appearance. He meditated suits, with a sub-purple glow, shirts, handkerchiefs and ties to correspond. Suppose, he thought, he got some gold cuff links, real gold, and just let his hand lie on the table. . . . They'd see.

Old Mr Blake, the erudite Frankincense, the young Indian, continued for the most part to treat him as an invisible man, but the women, he felt, noticed all these things. He was discovering a new use for women. They were interested in and affected by the clothing of the male. A new suit, a new cut of collar, a fresh tie—they saw it directly you came into the room. They looked at each other. He caught them at it. Thump was friendly, but he missed Edward Albert's finer points.

Our hero was steadily becoming more unobjective and more autobiographical in his mind. When he went for a walk nowadays he found a new interest in the reflection of himself in oblique shop windows. He hardly ever looked at people. He looked for people who were looking at him. Sometimes he carried it off all right, but sometimes doubt would seize him and he would find himself uncertain about his steps and his hands became an encumbrance. Then he felt he would like to go home at once and change his clothes.

In spite of these incidental failures he would plan fresh aggressions. He had a vision of coming into the dining-room at seven-thirty sharp, eating his dinner in a tremendous hurry and departing headlong—*in faultless evening dress*—to some high and unknown destination! That would make them think. He came near to ordering that evening dress merely for the sake of that reverie.

But in truth Doobers was far too occupied with its own individual schemes of aggression to notice the mental stresses and turmoil of our hero. They thought of him, when they thought of him at all, merely as a gawky, growing young man with a rather convulsive, guilty manner if spoken to suddenly, a definitely Cockney accent, and an odd taste in dress.

## CHAPTER 5

*The Thump Tragedy*

NOW while these things were happening within our accumulating young man as Nature expanded and consolidated him, familiar faces were disappearing from Scartmore House and new ones replacing them, and he was growing into a more and more definitely recognised member of Mrs Doober's happy family. He watched the new arrivals with an increasing interest in his effect upon them, and he made advances to them instead of waiting to be accosted.

The Belgians went. They had found some sort of employment in the Congo Free State. Mr Frankincense took some tremendous honours in London University and went off, covered with glory, to become the Principal of a college in India where Indian young gentlemen studied to pass the degree examinations of London University. The seditious laugh of the long, lean Indian was heard no longer in the boarding-house, and old Mr Blake, having accumulated enough money to acquire an annuity, retired to a small boarding-house at Southsea where he devoted himself to composing a solidly libellous book to be published under the title of *Professors, so-called, and Performances*. It was to demonstrate the important rôle he had played in the development of physical science during the past forty years, for which he had never received the slightest credit. His departure was accelerated by the tragic death of Mr Harold Thump. "It will never be the same place without him," said old Mr Blake. "Sometimes we differed a bit in a friendly way, but it was all give and take. A fellow of infinite jest."

But I have still to tell you of that tragedy. It was a great shock for Doober's.

Mr Harold Thump, blythe after convivialities, had attempted, it seemed, to slide down the banisters of a restaurant staircase, instead of descending it in an ordinary

dull manner. The banisters, which were elegant and elderly, had given way at the second bend and sent him spinning head over heels into an open service lift, which he had descended in a crumpled state to break his neck at the bottom. His last recorded words were, "Hey, boys, look here!"

It was all over in a minute. "We thought he was walking down behind us," said the Boys in question, scared now and sober. "We heard him singing a bar or so, and then he seems to have taken it into his head to do it. He just flew by us."

"Like him," said Mrs Thump, tearlessly hearing the particulars.

It was a stupendous shock. Not only Mr Blake but the whole of Scartmore House was profoundly moved and hushed by this distressing event. The obliteration of so habitually audible an individual left the whole establishment for a while a self-conscious auditory vacuum. Most of the boarders seemed to have discovered for the first time that they also made sounds, and to have been cowed by the discovery. They spoke in whispers or undertones as if the departed was actually there lying in state instead of being away in a mortuary.

Respect restrained all unseemly playfulness. No games except chess went on, and that in silence. One was checked and mated by mouth-reading. And light and colour also were muted down. The small widow lady with mittens who had, so to speak, replaced the friend of Lady Tweedman, put aside the brilliant blazer she had been knitting, and started a black comforter, and the thoughtful man of thirty-five who had taken the room of Mr Frankincense openly read his Bible. Gawpy for her part tidied up the hall with extraordinary care and kept the blinds drawn at breakfast time in spite of the waste of gas. Doober's couldn't have shown more respect if it had been the King.

The dinner table conversation, except for an insincere appreciation of the lovely weather and some brightness and hopefulness about the tulips in Regent's Park and the Royal Academy, which was better than ever in spite of the war,

turned almost entirely on the virtues and personal charm of the deceased.

"The good that men assume lives after them,  
The truth is oft interred with their bones."

Some boarder would chew mournfully, meditating the while, and then break out. "He"—they never named him—"He was always so wonderful at Christmas. Christmas always seemed to brighten Him up. Like Dickens. Do you remember the time He gave us all with His snapdragon? He *would* have it done properly with the lights down, flaming away, and how he upset a lot of it on the carpet? Blue flames they were. Just like a big impatient Boy."

"But we stamped it out all right," said Mrs Doober. "And it really did no harm. On that old carpet. *How* we laughed!"

"If he'd only been more serious he would have been a great actor—a great comedy actor."

"He reminded *me* of Beerbohm Tree. The same big *humorous* personality. If he'd had the same chances, he might have had his own great Theatre."

"He was as sensitive as a child. Easily discouraged. That was his weakness. He hated to push. In this world you *must* push. But he wouldn't compete. And he'd sacrifice anything for a joke. You might say he sacrificed himself."

"A great man lost. Yet it never seemed to worry him. Buoyant he was—right up to the end."

Edward Albert thought out his special contribution to the chorus. "I'll miss him dreadfully. He was so kind and sorto-friendly like."

"It must have been a great experience to have known Him when He was young and still full of hope and promise."

The remark seemed aimed at Mrs Thump. She answered in her deliberate colourless way. "Yes. He was full of promise —then."

"A born playboy. He was nobody's enemy but his own."

"And it had to be paid for, of course," said Mrs Thump, and said no more.

The chorus was resumed. Edward Albert repeated his bit.

The only person who seemed to be backward in this heaping up of posthumous wreaths was Mrs Thump. At first that was ascribed to the depth of her sorrow. She had no words for it. Then it was whispered that she was going to have Him cremated, not handsomely buried in a large tomb, and that she was going away from London.

Cremation was a new idea to Edward Albert. It touched a vein of queer imagination in him. "It can't be *nice* being cremated," he said. "And where *are* you at the Resurrection? Just a jar or sumphink."

"This will be a shock to your literary work," said old Mr Blake to the widow, finding her sitting alone in meditation.

She considered him. She spoke quite calmly, but with an effect of relieving her mind of something that had been there too long. "No harm now in telling you that I don't do literary work. He put that about. *Amour propre*. He had his pride, you know. He just hated to think I was a pirate dressmaker, working myself to the bone with a roomful of hussies. That's what I am, you know, He was sensitive—in that way. That's all over now, and his feelings can't be hurt any more."

"I thought—" began old Mr Blake.

"No. I guess you guessed. Now I can go off to Torquay and run a decent business. I've always had a feeling for Torquay."

"Why couldn't you have done that before?"

"Because it wouldn't have paid enough, and He would have insisted on mixed bathing when He was tight and getting into trouble in the water, and also, you know, He'd have had to have a season ticket to run up to London."

She sat quite still for a moment and then shrugged her shoulders. "But why talk about these things now?"

Old Mr Blake turned that over in his mind and remarked afterwards to Edward Albert, since at the moment there was no one else to make his remark to; "That Mrs Thump is a pretty hard woman. Pretty hard. Very likely he didn't

succeed because she discouraged him. If only she'd believed in him more and shown it."

"I don't think she ought to have him cremated," said Edward Albert. "I *will* say that. . . ."

The more old Mr Blake thought over his relations to Harold Thump, the more they were transmuted from something very like hostility to profound understanding and affection. How good we can be to the dead ! How easily and unwittingly they become our allies ! We can quote things they never said in praise of us. Old Mr Blake knew what it was to be frustrated and pushed aside by inferior people—only too well. Harold Thump too, if he had had his proper opportunities and his proper support might have been a really very great man. But that hard woman had been too much for him.

A misogyny natural to old bachelors certainly influenced this judgment, which first he tried out on Edward Albert and then on other suitable listeners. Before she departed, Mrs Thump was under a shadow. It was felt that she had failed in her wifely duty and even perhaps deliberately dragged down this great man she had never really understood.

A certain callousness in her, to give it no harsher word, enabled her to disregard the one or two attempts that were made to convey these ideas to her.

After the cremation, Gawpy allowed the house to relax. Harold Thump became an exhausted topic almost at once. Mr Blake kept a faint glow of disapproval alight about Mrs Thump, until first she and then he departed. Nobody talked about the Thumps any more after that, and by degrees Doober's was filled by a new generation of boarders that knew not Harold. New jokes arose and established themselves and prevailed ; new voices bellowed in the bathroom. . . .

So it was that the Thumps and Mr Blake followed Mr Frankincense and the others out of Edward Albert's world and were replaced by others to whom he could present a firmer countenance.

## CHAPTER 6

*Mr Chamble Pewter*

M R CHAMBLE PEWTER, the man of thirty-five who had taken the room of Mr Frankincense, was a great reader of books. He liked old ripe rich books, and whenever he heard talk of a new book, it was his practice, he said, to read an old one. Reading and talking about reading, constituted his particular form of self-assertion. The current world might go its own way and invariably that way was despicable ; and while Edward Albert dreamt of impressing Doober's by departing to unknown entertainment in " faultless evening dress ", Mr Chamble Pewter got the same desired effect by producing a " well-thumbed " Horace. The flowering of Bloomsbury was yet to come, and he had still to face the arrogance of a movement that was at once congenial and contemporary. So what he said and did about Mr T. S. Eliot and Mr Aldous Huxley, is unfortunately outside the range of this story.

Edward Albert was as impressed by this book-reading as he was meant to be, and he was gratified to find Mr Chamble Pewter not unwilling to talk to him. It was necessary to Mr Chamble Pewter to talk to some one ; he could not talk at large and contentiously because that would have been vulgar, but he found Edward Albert extremely docile. Edward Albert did not always get the drift of what Mr Chamble Pewter said, but since they talked in undertones it was effective to sit and nod as though you did. " I am afraid," Mr Chamble Pewter would admit after some particularly dark saying, " I must plead guilty to a sense of humour. I don't know how I could get along in this absurd world without it."

Sometimes it seemed to Edward Albert that this sense of humour was very closely akin to that useful sceptical phrase, " I *don't* fink," which was spreading through the world, but he was not sure enough of the parallelism ever to use it to Mr Chamble Pewter

One particular target for Mr Chamble Pewter's confidential asides was a blond young American student full of enthusiasm for what the sound conservative instincts of Edward Albert and Mr Chamble Pewter convinced them were the meretricious and unstable inventions and discoveries of modern science. His form of self-assertion was informative. His formula was, " You haven't an idea ! " For a time you could hardly open your mouth at Doober's without his saying, " Oh, but that's all changed now." Did one talk of music ? He announced that for the first time pure sounds could be produced, that new and wonderful instruments would presently replace the traditional orchestras. In a little while the " old music " would sound smudgy and limited, pitiful. We should listen to the records in amazement. There would have to be a complete re-orchestration of any of the old music that was worth while. . . . Did one talk of the cinema, which genteel people were beginning to recognise might be in its vulgar way, funny, what with Charlie Chaplin and Mary Pickford ? At once our young man was talking of the sound and colour and solidity which were presently to invade the films. " Utter absurdity ! " whispered Mr Chamble Pewter. " They never know when to stop. Laughable, it is." Then about flying ? He talked of planes that would fly the Atlantic, carry gigantic bombs to Berlin, go to the very top of the air, go round the world in less than twenty-four hours, and then where will you be ? Chamble Pewter caught Edward Albert's eye. " And the moon ? " he whispered. Particularly foolish sounded the young man's talk upon those mad notions of psycho-analysis, relativity and the new missing links between men and the apes.

" A saucer full of rusty scraps of bone," said Mr Chamble Pewter. " And so, good-bye to God ! "

" The young American seemed to scent the evasive antagonism of Mr Chamble Pewter and trailed his coat. At last he provoked a skirmish and got the worst of it.

He was going on in his exasperating way, spoiling their dinners and trampling over their minds with some pretended find of another " human ancestor " from Rhodesia. " But

surely," remarked Mr Chamble Pewter in that mild, destructive voice of his, "you are being a little old-fashioned. This talk about human ancestors. Isn't it what we used to call Darwinism and all that?"

"None the worse for that," said the young American.

"But you are always being so very modern. Forgive me if I smile—I have rather a sense of humour—but surely you know Darwinism was completely exploded years and years ago?"

"First I've heard of that," said the young American, rather taken aback.

"We're none of us omniscient—even the youngest of us," said Mr Chamble Pewter.

"But how do you mean *exploded*?"

"What everybody means by exploded. Blown to pieces. Nothing left of him."

"But who exploded him?"

"Surely *you* know that! But I suppose we all have our limitations. Some professor at Montpellier—I forget his name—something about the birds and reptiles. A complete exposure. You should look into it. These disputes have never interested me very much, I must confess. But there it is.

"But you don't mean to tell me that," the young man began. "No decent zoologist has done anything to question the fact of organic evolution and the survival or extinction of species by natural selection since Darwin broached the idea. Of course in minor details, in accounting for variations, for instance. . . ."

Mr Chamble Pewter retained an expression of serene derision. "Since first I heard of it, I have never doubted for a moment that this idea of Evolution was utterly absurd. So why haggle about details?"

"Did you examine the evidence?"

"No," said Mr Chamble Pewter. The young American seemed to be at a loss for breath.

"I may be old-fashioned and all that," said Mr Chamble Pewter in the pause, "but I happen to prefer the Bible story of a creation, to Mr Darwin's curious idea that a large ape came

down a tree, went bald all over and wandered about until he met a female gorilla to whom, by some strange accident, the same impulse had occurred, a very very remarkable coincidence if you come to think of it, and that together they started the human race. I find that improbable to the pitch of absurdity."

"It is. It's a caricature. But have you ever looked into the evidence? Do you know how the case really stands?"

"Why should I? I believe with most rational people that this world was Created, and man and woman came straight from the hand of God, made in his image. How else could the world come about? How did it begin? We have age-long traditions, that great literature we call the Bible. I ask you plainly. Do you deny the Creation? That is to say, do you deny the Creator?"

The young man felt the chill of unpopularity about him.

"I deny the Creation," he said.

"Then you deny your Creator?"

"Well if you must have it—yes."

A breath of reprobation ruffled the gathering.

"But you mustn't say *that*!" said the little lady in mittens.

"You really mustn't say that."

"No, you can't say *that*," said Edward Albert decisively.

Mrs Doober murmured ambiguously as became her position, and even her down-trodden and practically negligible niece was faintly audible in reprobation.

"Forgive me if I smile," said Mr Chamble Pewter. "But I have this confounded sense of humour of mine. I suppose it's really a sense of proportion. But now I'm speaking out, let me say plainly that you scientific people would be insufferable if your ideas had anything like the importance you claim for them. Imagine it. Think of the churches, the cathedrals, the countless good works, the martyrdoms, the saints, the vast legacy of art and beauty, the music drawing its inspiration from the divine fount, for all music to begin with was religious, the institution of family life, purity, love, chivalry, kingship, loyalty, the crusades, Benedictine, Chartreuse, the wines of France, hospitals, charities, the whole rich fabric of Christian

life. Strip it from us and what is there left of us? You would leave us shivering in the void. Yes, Sir, the void. A world of mechanical apes. Because a few crazy old gentlemen have found some bones and had fancies about them. And they don't agree even among themselves. Take that queer paper *Nature* and what do you find? Science perpetually contradicting itself. . . ."

"But——!" The young American had attempted to cut in once or twice upon the flow of eloquence. But every time the new little lady boarder with the mittens had intervened with infinite gentleness and infinite insolence. "Do *please* let him finish first," she said. "*Please.*"

"Tell me when you've finished," said the altogether too modern young man.

"It's a question of whether *you* are finished," said Mr Chamble Pewter, and ceased abruptly.

And this arrogant young man had nothing to say. He had asserted himself over Doober's too confidently, and now he found Doober's solid against him. Not a soul had he captured. Even the blonde Miss Pooley, who had seemed at times to listen to him with interest, gave no sign. "Wal!" he said. "I never met such ignorance. Here are ideas that are revolutionising the whole human outlook, and you not only don't know a Thing about them, but you don't *want* to know a Thing about them."

Mr Chamble Pewter drank his coffee and regarded the young American with a quizzical expression. He put down his cup. "Yes," he said. "We don't want to know a Thing about them."

"I give it up," said the young American.

Mr Chamble Pewter shrugged his shoulders and a profound silence ensued.

"Such a lovely black cat jumped on to my window-sill just before dinner," said the little widow lady with the mittens, relieving the tension.

"Black Toms are said to be very lucky," said Mrs Doober.

The arsenal of modern ideas got up slowly and thoughtfully

and departed to his own room. The discussion was not resumed.

Later Mrs Doober heard him go out and slam the door behind him as loudly as it could be slammed, and she knew from years of experience that he was going out to find another boarding-house.

[Oh ! If only people wouldn't get into these arguments ! It had happened before several times. And he was punctual in payment, quiet, gave no trouble.]

It was wonderful to Edward Albert. He was overcome by a wave of discipleship. It was just what he would have said and done himself—if it had occurred to him to say or do anything of the sort. He tried to memorise some of Mr Chamble Pewter's best strokes before they faded from his mind, so that he could use them later. But he never achieved anything like the polish they had. Throughout this narrative you will hear Edward Albert making frequent use of such destructive comments as "Bawls" or "Dam-rot" or "piffle before the wind", or "I suppose that's all right for *you*", or "What's the evidence for that?" "You can't put that over me", and so on. He even got to "Forgive me if my sense of humour prevents my swallowing that sort of rot."

These were the outer defences of a more and more deeply entrenched ignorance. His instinct had always been to hate novel ideas, more particularly ideas that perplexed him or challenged his prepossessions. But previously he has been inclined to fear them. Now he despised them as impotent. In all this he was being thoroughly English. The Armistice celebrations had filled the soul of *Homo Tewler Anglicanus* with an immense reassurance. For yet another quarter of a century the educational mandarinate of the victorious Allies protected itself behind a Chinese Wall of self-satisfaction, and the growing body of modern knowledge, having no sense of humour, spluttered indignantly and in vain. As we have heard it splutter. But you can't be too careful of these strange new ideas and new things. You must not tamper with them. If you try to understand them, they may entangle and get hold of you, and then where will you be ? Hide your mind

from them, and hide them from your mind. Stick to the plain common sense of life. There will always be a to-morrow rather like to-day. At least so far there always has been a fairly similar to-morrow. Once or twice lately there have been jolts. . . .

Try not to notice these jolts.

"It is no good meeting trouble half way."

## CHAPTER 7

### *They Come ; They Go*

SO it was that Doober's changed continually and remained always the same, as manhood dawned murkily upon our Edward Albert. Doober's, until he was wrenched out of it by circumstances beyond his control, was the foundation of his world. But outside it a number of other human encounters were streaming past him, making suggestions to him and deflecting his ideas about life. The staff he worked with at North London Leaseholds was a purely male one, and his general pose towards his colleagues was of someone "a bit superior" who condescended rather than was compelled to earn. He felt he dressed better than they did. He made a certain mystery of his place of residence ; he had more pocket money ; most of them still lived in and paid in to their homes. But if he offended them they controlled their resentment at his airs, and he found it more agreeable to go with them to the restaurant they frequented for lunch than to sit alone. And there they met "the girls"

The girls were still cheaper human material than the clerical staff ; they functioned in another department with envelopes and postal responses of various sorts. And they mixed very cheerfully with the boys at the lunch-time rendezvous. There was a certain process called getting away with a nice boy, and there was a natural response in the adolesc ing male. A mutual possessiveness was established, which, in those days of underpaid femininity, meant taking your girl out in the

evening to a café gossip or a cinema or even a music hall, and paying for her. It was only in the latter stages of the first World War that anything like economic equality dawned on young women. And the North London Leaseholds girls found a certain stand-offishness in Edward Albert provocative rather than annoying, and he responded with a certain excitement. This was far easier and simpler and less sustained than the relationships at Doober's. He discovered "flirting", that mutual stimulation of egotism.

Marriage was something remote and incredible for all these youngsters, so that one "paid attention" and professed all sorts of amorous feelings with the completest immunity from any sort of fulfilment. It was a play of self-assertion, remote from any thought of that It, which distressed his dreams and secracies.

He had a number of shadow love affairs, with Effie and Laura and Molly Brown, the only one whose surname he acquired, and several whose Christian names slipped his memory. The shadow took on a certain substance with Molly Brown. He took her one sunny Sunday to Rickmansworth for a country walk, and they got some ham and beer at an inn. Then they wandered into a patch of woodland and sat down in the shade of some bracken. They looked at one another in a mood of ignorant desire. "Let's smoke," she said.

"If anyone sees us," he said.

"Nobody's seeing us," she said, and they smoked and regarded one another.

"Well?" she said, when the smoking was done. They heard a burst of giggling and little squeals in the adjacent bushes. "Her chap's tickling her!" she said. Edward Albert took no further action.

She sprawled back leisurely and regarded him.

"Kiss me, Teddy!" she said, and she kissed him! She kissed rather nicely. "Like that?" she asked, and they kissed again. "Put your arm round me. No, so . . . Let's cuddle up close."

He cuddled tepidly.

" My, I wish it was dark. Then we *could* cuddle. Couldn't we stay till after dark and cuddle ? "

" Oo. I dunno. P'raps we're trespassing here. Someone might come along and see us."

" People won't mind us just cuddling. They all do it here. Some of them do more than that."

He mumbled a reply. He was trembling violently. Her kisses and her embrace had set him alight. He wanted to hug her violently, and also he wanted to run away. He was acutely aware of his visibility and with the stir of his senses all the secretive factors in his sensuality were aroused. She kissed him a third time and his self-control exploded. His grip tightened upon her ; he held her beneath him, and hugged, hugged actively, breathing hard, until suddenly he was satisfied, and sat up as suddenly and pushed her away from him. She had been struggling against his onslaught. "Lemme go," she whispered fiercely " *Starp* it, I tell you ! "

She rolled away from him and sat up also. Her hat had come off, her hair was disordered, her skirts pushed up to her knees, and her expression ruffled. Both of them were flushed and out of breath and surprised.

The tickling had ceased apparently ; nobody was audible ; the only sound was the breeze among the bracken.

She looked about them. " My word," she said, in an undertone, " you *do* hug."

" I—I liked it, Molly."

" I didn't. You were rough." Look at my hair ! " She adjusted her crumpled frock and edged still further away from him. " You'll have to help look for my hair-pins. " You seemed just to go right off your nut."

" Well, you *made* me."

" I like that."

" You led me on."

" I'll take jolly good care I don't lead you on again, my boy. You were *rough*. You were *horrid*."

" Just a bit of fun like, Molly. I didn't *mean* anything."

" Look at my 'at ! "

Another young couple in search of retirement rustled through the undergrowth twenty yards away.

"Suppose they'd come by just now," said Molly with three pins in her mouth, remodelling her hat.

"Well they didn't anyhow," said Edward Albert, becoming snappy.

"If they 'ad——"

"Why 'arp on it?" he snarled.

The rest of the afternoon was spent in an atmosphere of mute reproach. They went home long before dusk, and she decided to leave him and go to church with her mother. "Right O," said he, instead of the usual tender good night.

He retired thoughtfully to Scartmore House. He reflected that the path of true love never had run smooth.

He knew he was in love with Molly because otherwise why should he have wanted her so much and given way like that?

He wanted to hug again, already, and he dreaded hugging her again. But the next time they met she seemed to have forgotten her urgency and he was disappointed. They sat on a seat by the road on Hampstead Heath, making no further allusion to hugging, and he went on with his favourite impersonation of a mysterious bastard. "I don't know who my father was or what he was. I've been sort of made away with. . . ."

The difficulty of the story was to keep it so as to avoid any suggestion of Great Expectations. For you cannot be too careful. She seemed to listen with a jaded interest, and when he suggested she should give him a kiss she gave him a peck on the cheek. "Let's go for a ramble into these bushes," he suggested. She shook her head.

"Just a little bit of spooning," he pleaded.

"You don't know where to stop. I don't like—what you did. You know. Sunday."

Their next meeting was more hopeful. He took her to a cinema and they sat holding hands side by side in quite their old fashion. Afterwards they got some lemon squash and a sandwich in the new little ham and beef shop, and they had a little tiff about the magic of Rudolph Valentino, which was

healed when she accepted Edward Albert's contention that there was something un-English about Rudolph and admitted that for her own part she couldn't imagine how any English-woman could feel "that way" about any foreigner. "I'd almost as soon a Chinese. But then of course *she* was half-Mexican."

That was all right. They met again. But she kept him at arm's length, and both were much too tongue-tied to explore the difficult question of what "going too far" might mean.

The warmth of his physical interest in her cooled. . . .

That was one significant incident in his sentimental education. He tried to find a stimulus in one or two of the other girls, but there wasn't much doing with them. His feelings towards her were invaded by a streak of possessive dislike. She had led him on. He brooded resentfully on that idea. She had let him and then she hadn't let him any more. For a time they went about together largely, though they did not realise it, to keep up appearances with the rest of the boys and girls. Once or twice he was stirred to a competitive attempt at resumption by the realisation that she was going around with another fellow. She was "nice" to him, but more and more evasive. . . .

"Well anyhow," soliloquised the disillusioned Edward Albert, "he won't *get* much."

At the Imperial College of Commercial Science Edward Albert made very few personal contacts of any sort. There were a few possible young women about he thought he might have flirted with, but he couldn't contrive any method of accosting them, and the chief other factor in the evocation of Edward Albert's manhood, was such intercourse as he had with his old schoolfellows who still remained in the neighbourhood of Camden Town.

The school was there still. Once or twice he caught a glimpse of Mr Myame in the offing, but escaped his hirsute disapproval by dodging down a side street. One boy whose name he forgot met him one day and told him that the old man had forbidden the school to speak to him. "He said you

were an evil companion. What was it all about? D'jer get a girl into trouble?"

"Don't *ask* me," said Edward Albert, and nursed that gratifying suspicion. "It was sumfthing pretty awful," he said.

Blond Bert Bloxham with the dissimilar aunt was still in the neighbourhood, though Nuts MacBryde of the warts had drifted to Clapham. Bert's looks had never been much to boast about, and he was more than ever like a large hairy onion. But he too was in a state of feverish sexual awakening. He too was on the rack between the insanity of Nature cranking away at one end and the insanity of the social order cranking away at the other.

He began at once with reminiscences of the Hidden Hand. "I still got that stable," he said, "and it's safer than ever. The O' girl's so heavy now, she'd break the ladder if she tried it. I got some photographs there—oh, hot stuff. Show you everything. I got 'em off a man in the Strand late one night when I was doing a prowl. I'll show you them."

He paused. "Ever 'ad a woman yet, Tewler? . . . Yes, I 'ave." (Description.) "And I don't care 'ow many more I 'ave. But them street walkers. You can't be too careful. You know they don't wash theirselves. They smell. Puts you off it." (Rough account of Precautions to take.) "But never mind about that. That's by the way. I got my plans. What I'm going to 'ave is a little love nest, my boy, a little love nest of my own. Up the ladder we go, eh? What price ankles? You're going to show more than that, my gel. And 'ere we are playing Adam and Eve together. Ever played Adam and Eve, Tewler?"

"Leastways that's what I'm going to do," said Bert, "when I get hold of a girl I fancy. And they ain't 'ard nowadays, not like before the war. Girls ain't the same. Nothing's the same. And if ever *you* get anybody. Old friends we are. I'll make it as safe for you up there, o' boy. Safe as 'ouses. . . ."

That was the sort of chance the fickle Molly had thrown away. What did she want really? Bother her! Forget her.

Adam and Eve indeed! Catch her! Catch her taking off a blessed thing! With her everlasting "*Slap it.*"

Presently Edward Albert found himself actually flirting in Doober's and being competed for, actually competed for, by two energetic and interesting young women only five or six years older than himself. They were overripe virgins and they too suffered from the tortures of suppression the social order inflicted upon them. Nature urged them on and they didn't know, they didn't know, and an infinite futility was expected of them. What outlook had they? Older men would fall for any cheeky kid of sixteen first, and there didn't seem to be any young men left. Such a lot of young men had been killed. What were left were Nancy boys. They were mostly objectors to war and love alike. They seemed to have turned their backs on life altogether. But here was something at once male and ostensibly harmless, that had missed all that.

The attentions of these young women seemed to him much more formidable and much more interesting than those of the Leasehold office girls, particularly after Molly let him down. He talked to them with an intermittent nervous laugh as a sort of declaration of insincerity. He didn't dare think of kissing or hugging them or anything of that sort, he didn't know how they'd take it, but he said the boldest things to them. Much worse than what he said to the North London Leaseholds girls, who'd snap your head off at almost anything.

They began it. They certainly began it. They wanted to win his calf love and reduce him to adoration, slavery, timid offerings, and the running of errands, which is what adolescents are for. Easier than men but not so dangerous as men. Either could have managed it, no doubt, but not both.

One was a remarkable dark young woman who had been in France for some months, and had become temporarily Frenchified by that experience. Her name was Evangeline Birkenhead, she was interested apparently in the glove trade, but in what precise capacity was never revealed. She was destined to play a much ampler rôle in Edward Albert's life than he anticipated, and we shall have much to tell about her. She spoke French which sounded like the real thing, faster

than the Belgians but only in flashes, and Miss Pooley, whose style was much more deliberate, seemed to listen first with incredulous perplexity and then with an ill-concealed delight. She would manœuvre, Edward Albert noted, to sit within earshot of Evangeline.

Evangeline's rival, Miss Blame, was a blonde young woman, a fluffy bleached blonde, soft-spoken and almost inarticulate, but with extremely significant, desirous eyes. She listened and looked at Edward Albert. She had a way of putting her hands on him, on his shoulders, even on his hands on the chair arm, and they were extremely soft hands. She would whisper, a warm zephyr against his cheek, She drew him out. She asked what his ambitions were.

"Jerst go on looking at you," said Edward Albert gallantly.

"But tell me about yourself. What do you think of Miss Birkenhead? She's awfully clever, don't you think?"

"Clever is as clever does," said Edward Albert darkly.

"You're a bit in love with her?"

"'Ow could I be?"

Interrogative purr.

"Cos I'm *devoted*," said the wicked flirt, and refrained from clinching matters by crooning, "to yew".

And when Evangeline taxed him with sitting about with that Blame girl and asked what he could possibly find to talk about with her, "I jest don't notice *where* I sit, when you're about," said Young Artfulness. "I jest don't. And as for talking! Well, I *ask* you."

Great fun! A safe game, and a harmless one, it seemed to him, not realising how vulnerable he was presently to become.

Yet the thought of marriage was already in his mind as he returned from Edinburgh in that luxurious first-class carriage, to London. He realised now that a way was opening to alleviate the fears and desires that were devastating his mind. He would look round and find a nice little wife. A thrill of anticipation followed the thought. You couldn't be too careful, of course. A nice, healthy, simple, pure-minded girl. There were endless girls you wouldn't dream of marrying, designing hussies, hot stuff you couldn't trust round the corner.

And there it would be, safe at home and always handy. Just whenever you liked. No risk of entanglements ; no risk of those horrible diseases, no more horrible phases of unsatisfied lust and shame. And that little wife, that smiling, yielding little wife. Church of England preferably. She'd have to be religious, otherwise you never knew. He whistled softly in his characteristic way as the reverie unfolded. They wouldn't have a lot of children to bother them and spoil her figure. Dear old Bert had put him wise about that. And imagine it ! Running up against Nuts or Bert, for example, with the little lady dressed up to the nines. "Ellow me to introduce you to Mrs Tewler !" he'd say. He'd buy her things. He'd surprise her by giving her all sorts of things. She'd just love it. "Look what I brought you now," he'd say.

Love's young dream.

In all of this he was reckoning without Evangeline Birkenhead. He never gave her a thought until he went in to dinner that evening. "You back !" she said, and "Come over here next me and tell me about it."

He hurried across the room to her with a provocative mixture of irony and reverence. He wasn't going to tell anyone exactly why he had gone away or what had happened to him. He was just going to be mysterious and have a fine time with the two of them.

But Mrs Doober had been talking already. Mr Doober had been consulted when first that letter came from Edinburgh, even before Mr Whittaker.

## CHAPTER 8

### *Evangeline Birkenhead*

THE time has come to tell more about this Miss Evangeline Birkenhead. . . .

There must be a Buchmanite strain in me. I know of no other writer so anxious to share his troubles and limitations with his readers.

For example : here is a grave technical difficulty. I doubt whether in an English novel I am justified in assuming that either I or the reader knows French, as a Frenchman might know it. But Miss Birkenhead at this phase in her career had a curious disposition to use French under the most unexpected circumstances—and I do not feel that either I or the reader has the right to set up as a judge of the sort of French she spoke or to pretend to translate what she was saying. So the proper thing to do here seems to be to report as exactly as possible what she said, to note several occasions when it seemed to produce reactions other than those she had anticipated, and to say no more about it. And if most of what she said remains incomprehensible, then the effect on the reader will be virtually the effect on Edward Albert, and he after all is our story.

Evangeline's particular form of self-assertion, when she joined the Doober community, was to talk with extreme enthusiasm of dear Paree. She was just back after a sojourn there of half a year ; she was homesick to return thither ; she was doubtful if she could until her holidays came round, and London looked all the darker to her in contrast to the clouds of continental brilliance she trailed. She appeared in the boarding-house almost simultaneously with Miss Blame, whose form of self-assertion was visual rather than verbal.

Evangeline was dark and sallow, with thin arched eyebrows and a hungry enterprising hazel eye, and there was that cachet about her costume which only the great establishments of the Louvre and the Grands Boulevards can confer. Never had anything so visibly French sat at Mrs Doober's table.

She told the story of her Great Adventure to the little group at her end of the table, to Edward Albert and Miss Blame, who responded with sympathetic murmurs, and the young Dutchman from the room opposite Edward Albert's, who was trying to learn English, who listened attentively and with a vacant amiable smile, never quite seeming to understand, and the little widow in mittens who would listen to anything consistent with morality and nod her head approvingly, and Miss Pooley who was at first a trifle aloof and then began to

listen with something almost like relish, and Gawpy whose business it was to take an interest in everybody, and Mrs Doober who usually sat out of earshot but listened so to speak with a wary eye and smiled when it looked as though Evangeline was entertaining her hearers.

But Mr Chamble Pewter found nothing in Evangeline to appeal to his sense of humour and edged away up the table past Mr Doober to deplore the delinquency of the times with an elderly vegetarian who was an expert at book-binding and slightly deaf, who expressed strong views about tinned foods and cancer, and otherwise kept very much to himself. . . .

"I'd always wanted to go to Paris," said Evangeline explaining herself, "even as a schoolgirl. I *loved* French at school. I only did it for a year just at the end, but I got the school prize. It was all about dear Paree with lovely coloured pictures. I used to say, if ever I get married, I'll insist on Paree for my honeymoon. And then lo and behold early this year I learnt to my amazement I was to be sent to France, free gratis and for nothing for six months—*gratuitment*. Would I mind going? *Mind! Que voulez-vous?*"

"Who wouldn't?" said Gawpy, manifestly sharing the rapture.

"*Laissez faire* sont *laissez faire*," said Evangeline. "It wasn't all sightseeing by any means and it wasn't all learning French. But the war had put all our business out of joint and somebody extra was wanted, and they picked on me. Just a week's notice, one week, and there I was—a lovely crossing—saying Adieu to the white cliffs of Albion. And then, behold me! Down the gangway and everybody about me shouting and screaming French. To begin with I seemed to forget every word I'd ever learnt of it."

Edward Albert nodded understandingly.

"It's surch a *brilliant* language. There isn't a word in it that hasn't a double entente. Stodgy old English, bourgeois to the finger tips, *walks*. French jumps about. *Gay!* *Pierreuse*, you might say. . . .

"Nimble it is and always a little bit naughty. *Esprit*

it has and a *je ne sais quoi*—oh, how do they say it?—ah!—*élan vital!* So quick, so polite. You say to a common taxi driver, ‘*Cocher ! Pouvez-vous me prendre ?*’ and he laughs and says, ‘*May’ volontier mam’selle, toujours à votre service.*’ Fancy our London cabbies saying anything like that !

“ There was a gentleman we did business with. He took quite an interest in me and taught me a lot, one way and another. No, don’t you go imagining things ! He was quite an *old* gentleman, and he was half-English, but all the same he didn’t mind being seen about with some one who wasn’t his grand-daughter. *Comprenez ? Pas de tout. Pas de deux.* Which is it ? I forget.

“ We got on beautifully together. I used to call him my *faux pa* and he simply *loved* that. He would repeat it to everyone who came in.

“ He had a flat *au bordel riviera*—on the Seine, you know. Just above one of those *mouche* piers—where the steamboats come. There was an office there where we worked, and he would take me out to lunch and get me to talk French and encourage me. He would laugh and say ‘ Go on. The way to speak French is to speak it.’

“ I used to say ‘ *Am I speaking French ?* ’ and he used to say ‘ Not *quite* French yet, cherry ’—he used to call me cherry, ‘ my dear ’ you know—quite in a fatherly way. ‘ It’s not French yet,’ he would say, ‘ but it’s very good Entente Cordial. It’s the best Entente Cordial I’ve ever met yet. I wouldn’t miss a word of it.’ He used to call it Entente Cordial because he said it was quite a pick-me-up to talk it as I did. Oh ! We had surch fun.”

So Evangeline unfolded herself and from the first appreciated the appreciation in Edward Albert’s admiring eyes. He was, as I have said, the nearest thing to a negotiable male in the establishment just then, for it was soon plain that the young Dutchman who was learning English had convinced himself that so far as Evangeline was concerned understanding was hopeless. She did her best, but what can you do with a man who answers your brightest remarks with the irrelevance of the deaf ?

One day Edward Albert found a half sheet of notepaper lying on the floor near the writing desk in the snuggery. It was in Miss Pooley's handwriting, but he did not know that and he brought it to Evangeline in all good faith.

"This yours?" he asked. "It seems to be French."

It was headed *Menu Malaprop* and it ran as follows:

*Potage Torture*

*Maquereau (Vent blank)*

*Agneau au sale bougre*

Or perhaps a *Gigolo (Vent rouge)*

*Petits pois sacree*

*A nice hot chauffeur*

*Demi tasse a l'Americaine*

*Champagne fin du monde p.p.c.*

*Fumier s.v.p.*

Evangeline read it and flushed darkly.

"Beast!" she said, with more temper than she had ever before betrayed to Edward Albert. "She talks French like a High School grammar. Well, I learnt mine by ear, and she learnt hers with that bulging forehead of hers. . . . I suppose she thinks this funny."

She hesitated and then crumpled the little document into a ball in her fist.

"Didn't seem funny to me," said Edward Albert loyally. "But then I don't know the language. . . . Shall I chuck that in the fire for you?"

## CHAPTER 9

### *Entangled*

"YOU'VE been away more than a week. What have you been doing up there in Scotland? They make a great mystery of it."

So it was she began on that fateful evening of his return. She spoke in an intimate undertone. Miss Blame had dined and gone upstairs and Miss Pooley was out. The Dutchman

was rapt in thought about the English Subjunctive Mood, and quite unheeding a talk that plainly was not addressed to him. "Eef you were," he was whispering over and over again. "Eef you was. Yess." She had waited for Edward Albert and now behind this barrier she had him to herself.

"Jerst business affairs," he told her. "Fact is—quite unexpected—I been left an estate—in Scotland."

"An estate!"

"Property anyhow. No idea I had any relations up there. Right out of the blue. There's things have been kep' from me. I been sort of made away with. I always felt it—kind of mystery. I been seeing lawyers and agents and all that."

"And is it murch, Teddy? I hope it won't take you away from here. I shou'd miss you."

"Well, I'll be pretty well off. Naturally I ain't made any plans. It's all so sudden. I don't want to go away from here—and *you*. You all," he corrected, feeling that after all others might be listening. "Leastways not till I got somewhere to go."

She nodded. "What does it all come to?"

His discretion gave way to his desire to be impressive. "Some fousands," he said, "anyhow."

"Independence."

"All that," he said.

"Lucky Teddy! You can go where you like; you can do what you please."

"I'm going to look round me a bit first. You know I'm not even going to give up my—business job. Not for a bit. Just for something to do, I'll keep it. I'd feel kind of lost. You see, you can't be too careful. All this money; it's come like a dream. Suppose I wake up to-morrow and find it *was* a dream."

"Yes," she said, "I can understand that at first. But you'll find it real. You'll find all the world before you."

"I suppose if you was me you'd go right off to that gay Paree of yours?"

"I wonder. I might not, because you see then I could do it at *any* time, Teddy. I might want to stay here a bit. Just

as you might. I might feel I was tearing myself away from—  
from something I cared for and wanted to go on seeing.  
We're very much alike, Teddy, you and me, in a lot of  
things."

"I never thought of that."

"But we are, you know."

"P'raps we are. Only you're kind of cleverer. . . .

She was so intent on their mutual business that she had completely forgotten her enthusiasm for French. She was just her pre-Parisian self, and hardly a word of Entente Cordial escaped her.

When they went up stairs she put her arm through his, a thing she had never done before. "Come into the corner," she said, "I must talk some more to you about all this. Down there at table with all those people peeping and listening, one couldn't let oneself go. But no I murst, I murst talk to you, Teddy, my dear. I'm so happy to see you so happy and I'm so afraid for you and the things that may happen to you. It will be wonderful for you to get away from all this. Do what you choose. Lead a life of your own. And so dangerous. I envy you, Teddy boy, I envy you. I could cry over you."

Her intense sincerity evoked a reciprocal sincerity in him. Presently he was exposing himself to her as he rarely exposed himself even to himself. They sat close together so that the breath of their common desire mingled. She had dressed herself carefully and thinly, and he could feel her soft arm against his shoulder and her hand rested lightly on his knee.

"Of course you know I'm not what you might call educated—not highly educated. I often think if I could get someone to help me a bit——And now——Particularly. . . ."

"Couldn't I perhaps—help you?"

"*You'd 'elp me?*"

"I'd love to."

"Me? You with your travel and all that, and the books you've read and knowing French as you do. I'd seem common. . . ."

She looked at him steadily for a moment. "You're the

most lovable modest man I've ever known, my dearest. A woman wants to give. I tell you I'd love to do—anything—for you. To give myself wholly. Can I?"

He lost his last trace of coquettishness.

"You know I've always *said* I loved you. Always. I mean it."

"You love me?"

A heavily charged silence ensued. She was speaking so closely that he could feel the beating of her heart. There was a glow in her eyes. He trembled. He wanted to kiss her. But this was no place for kisses. Maybe someone was peeping at them round an evening paper or out of a corner. You could never be sure at Doober's. Never.

"I love you," he whispered.

"*Love*," she answered.

They were silent for an intense moment.

"You mean it?"

"Strike me dead."

There was another yet longer pause. Then she looked at her wrist watch. "Time I was in bed," she said. "I've to be at business at nine to-morrow, my dear. Back at the old grind."

"Not for long," he said. "Not now."

And with that it seemed everything was said.

She stood up and smiled.

He stood up smiling back at her.

He went upstairs after her, not caring now who saw them. For he'd got her. None of your "Starp it" kids this time. This meant everything. Miss Blame in a distant corner affected to be reading. Outside her room Evangeline stopped short and shot a hasty glance upstairs and down. Not a soul in sight and nobody listening. She took both his hands in hers and held them for a moment, looking at him possessively. Then she dropped them, and slowly, deliberately, drew his head to hers and kissed him. It was a long thirsty kiss; it was the kiss of a bright-minded young woman who had given some thought to the matter, it wandered a little and then closed down, and with it the last memory of Molly's kissing

vanished from his mind. "And so," she said at last in a low whisper, "Good night, my lover. *Je t'aime, je t'adore.*"

He hesitated. "Good night," he said almost interrogatively.

"Good night," she said.

He went on up to his own room. He looked back over the banisters but her door had closed noiselessly behind her. . . .

He lay awake for a very long time in a state of intense excitement. Reverie and desire danced a wild fandango in his cranium. He went to bed and got up again. He walked about his room in his pyjamas. He went to his door, listened a long time, opened it softly and peered downstairs. "Evangeline," he whispered very softly, heard the young Dutchman opposite snoring, and retired precipitately into his room again.

There he stripped himself and contemplated himself as well as he could in his little looking-glass. The salt cellars over his collar bones, he decided, were not as hollow as they used to be.

He meditated.

Finally he got into bed and embraced his bolster with passionate tenderness. "Evangeline," he whispered to it. "Oh, my dear Evangeline. Say you love me. Keep on saying you love me. Keep—keep on."

And so at last he was able to sleep.

## CHAPTER 10

### *Engaged*

"BUT, my dear, we can't be married from the same address. That would never do. There's People to consider. *My people anyhow.*"

Edward Albert did not see that at first. His mind was concentrated upon the achievement of Evangeline and It, and the intervening events that must precede this consummation did not interest him at all, until she made them interest him. He saw no reason why they should not anticipate

marriage at Doober's, and he had a vague idea that it was possible to go to the nearest registry office and accomplish marriage there and then. These things had never entered his circle of ideas before his return from Edinburgh.

"But if one's in love one wants each other. I tell you I want you, Evangeline. *Dreadfully*. I *can't* tell you. I *can't* hold myself."

"Darling, I'm as impatient as you are. More I think. But we *murst not* create a scandal. We *merst not*. How will it look in *The Times*, Marriages—of the same address? *Pas possible, Cheri. Je m'en fiche de tout cela.*"

She regarded him. "You look like a sulky baby, you darling! . . . Diddums. Diddums keep um waiting? I could kiss you right away now. I shall it you don't mind."

"Aw! Don't torment me," said Edward Albert and edged away from her.

They had been engaged three days and they were sitting in the pretty lower garden of Regent's Park. The fact of the engagement had been conveyed to Mrs Doober for tactful release to the boarders, and apart from a humorous grimace on the part of Mr Chamble Pewter and a rather pointed discourse delivered by Miss Blame in a corner of the drawing-room to the little old lady in mittens and Mr Doober's niece on the subject of gold-diggers and kidnappers, which may or may not have been intended for Edward Albert's ears, the social disturbance was slight. Mrs Doober behaved generously although she was losing two regular and solvent clients, and she gave Edward Albert an excellent and quite unsolicited testimonial. "So quiet and well-bred," she specified.

Gawpy told Evangeline she *was* a lucky girl no end and Edward Albert that he *was* a lucky man no end, and confided to them that she was still waiting for *her* knight to come and rescue her from the enchanted castle.

Edward Albert, after a slight hesitation, had ended his clerkship with North London Leaseholds, but Evangeline found it flatteringly difficult to sever her business connection. "They *jurst* don't know where anything is, if I'm not there,"

she said, and it was arranged for her to keep on upon a half-time arrangement until she had trained a successor. The training she gave was considerably weakened by her overwhelming impulse to talk all the time to her trainee about her matrimonial anticipations.

She had revealed a very considerable amount of administrative self-confidence from the very outset of their new relationship. Edward Albert's worldly inexperience and his extreme preoccupation appealed to the latent mother in her. Every side of her womanhood was aroused.

She had decided that a comfortable apartment, a whole floor at least ("Our *home*, darling") was to be found in one of the Bloomsbury Squares. "We'll go and begin looking for it the afternoon after to-morrow. Such fun!"

"I suppose we *got* to do all this," he said.

She managed the hunt for a home very capably. She talked to house agents and lodging-house proprietors. She did all the talking. He affected a masterful dignity, but inwardly he resented her leadership. But his desire for her subdued him. He had something of the expectant meekness of a dog in love.

They found what she wanted just out of Torrington Square, not simply a floor but the upper part of a house, two reception rooms, two *good* bedrooms and two other rooms that might also be bedrooms or anything else you liked, a pantry kitchen, a larder, a box-room and a bathroom! He was secretly dismayed at the difficulty he would have in living in such a lot of rooms at once, but she was delighted. The rent was very reasonable and she had never expected so much social expansion.

The rent was low because the meek incapable little lady who owned the house and lived in the lower half of it had hitherto let the upper half unfurnished. Then, seized by a spirit of enterprise, she had decided to furnish the rooms on the hire purchase system and *do* for the new occupants. An artist gentleman had moved in with a wife and such a lot of *lovely* pictures, and he had bought a piano on the hire purchase system. It had seemed a most satisfactory arrange-

ment for some days. Then everything had begun not to work. There was trouble about the servants *doing* for the additional people, the little lady explained in tones of mild indignation. Her cook had given notice and her other servant had walked out on her, the cook was downstairs at that very moment still being *most* disagreeable, and the artist gentleman, after ringing his bell until the battery was exhausted, had departed with his wife and his pictures in a taxi-cab, leaving the piano on her hands and his bills unpaid. "There he was, a great big man, and when I asked him what I could do about it all, he just said, 'You can sue me,' and made a nasty face at me. And he didn't even think to leave his address, so how *could* I sue him?"

The situation appealed to the quick business instincts of Evangeline. She surveyed the none too amply furnished rooms. "The piano's gone," she remarked.

"They took it yesterday. Where the plaster is knocked off the staircase wall. If only we could come to some arrangement. I should be so glad. But I can't *do* for you, I really can't *do* for you. It's the servants. Since the war—— Servants aren't what they were. Days out and Sunday afternoons. But everything's very convenient up here. You could have a nice respectable woman of your own to *do* for you. Then there wouldn't be the strain."

Evangeline's ready mind expanded at once to include a servant of her own. *Doing* for her, under her orders. A real servant one could put in a cap and apron! Who would answer the door. And a still more brilliant idea followed. When there was occasion for a special dinner, she might borrow the downstairs cook and pay her something extra. "Not too much," said Evangeline, "but enough to make things easy. And if I have to do a bit of cooking myself, it won't be the first time I've fayd the cuisine."

Before she had done with the incapable little lady the rooms were not so much taken as captured, and captured at a rental that was less than most of the mere apartments they had looked at hitherto.

"My husband—he'll be my husband in a few weeks and

then I'll come here to look after him for good——” said Evangeline, “ will take over the hire purchase agreement, and we'll have to get in a few things of our own, pictures and so on, to make the place homey. We'll get along all right.”

The incapable little lady said incoherent things about taking up references which Evangeline swept aside. “ But I'll have to write *something* down. Business, you know. There's your names and everything,” said the incapable little lady, and after having looked about for a pen and ink that had probably never been there, departed to get writing materials from the lower regions. Evangeline ushered her out competently, watched her descend, made sure the door was closed, and turned upon her lover, an Evangeline transfigured.

She had taken off her business face like a mask and she was all bright excitement. “ You darling patient thing ! ” she said. “ Isn't it lovely ! Isn't it all perfect ? ”

She threw her hands up in the air, pirouetted round towards him and finished by kissing him, vigorously. He gripped her responsively. “ Not now ! ” she said, disengaging his arms, “ She's coming back.”

They stood regarding each other. “ You done it pretty well,” he said.

“ I'm glad my lord approves.”

That was quite the tone to take. “ You *do* set about this sort of business pretty well,” he repeated.

The incapable little lady returned and took down their names and the proposed date of entry and what she called “ references ”. Evangeline gave two addresses that were strange to Edward Albert, and one—if he heard aright—was Scotland Yard. Scotland Yard ? Then came a pause.

“ We'll just look round a bit,” said Evangeline, dismissing her. “ There's just one or two things I want to measure.”

The incapable little lady withdrew, because there was manifestly nothing else for her to do, and again Evangeline was transfigured.

“ Mr Edward Albert Tewler at Home,” she said, bowing.

" Evadne darling."

" And about our wedding. We're going to have a real, proper wedding. None of your jump over a broomstick registry office affair. Voice that breathed o'er Eden and all of it. And you looking *lovely* in a silk hat and light grey trousers. You'll have, you know, white slips to your waistcoat."

" Gaw ! " said Edward Albert, flattered and attracted but very much scared.

" And orange blossom for me."

" But won't it be an expense ? "

" I'm afraid you'll think me terribly old-fashioned, but then I've got other people to consider. Isn't it queer you don't know anything about my people yet ? Not a thing. You never even asked. I've got a father and a godfather and cousins galore."

" I aren't going to marry all them," said the bridegroom.

" I'll protect you, Teddy. But there they are. We've got to humour them. My father he's a policeman—oh, not an ordinary policeman. He's at Scotland Yard. He's a C.I.D. Inspector Birkenhead. He's never had a big case yet, but some day he'll get his chance, he says. Very, very exact. Nothing escapes him. He's a bit stiff in his way—very proper-minded. You see my mother left him and he never quite got over it. If he knew—— If he thought we were going to anticipate—— ! "

" Nobody need know, need they ? "

" Heaven help us if *he* does. So you see it's got to be as I say. A proper wedding and someone to give me away."

" *Oo*'s going to give you away ? Ooo's got the right to give you away ? "

" Darling, I think we ought to go and see a proper wedding somewhere. Then you'll see how it's done. We've jurst got to have a best man to hop about and do everything for us. Rice and orange blossom and everything *de Rigor*. I've thought of all that. There's my cousins the Chasers. There's Millie, who used to go to school with me. She married young Chaser. Pip Chaser. He's a Card, as Arnold Bennett would say—a regular Card. Smart ! He's manager to a big West

undertaker and he can get carriages and horses for nothing in a stables. Carriages, Teddy ! But no black gloves and general baked meats for us ! *Old Mr Chaser* is my godfather. sells champagne—special non-vintage champagne for balls and night-clubs and weddings and things like that. a sort of champagne he gets made for him. It doesn't cost so much but it's just as good. *Better*, he thinks. And he's always promised that he would stand me my wedding breakfast when the great day came."

he reflected. "I won't have any of the people from business. No. I've done with that. They liked me of course. soon as I get clear of it all, it's good-bye for good. I don't want anyone hurt. . . .

'Some things are better ended for good and all. . . ."

She reflected. "No," she said, as if she closed a door. And about Doober's. Mrs Doober ? Dear old Gawpy. that's all. That half-wit niece might come to the church. . . ."

Edward Albert contemplated his future in a mood of triumphant assertion. Somehow he wanted Bert and Nuts to be there, astonished, and some of the chaps and girls in North London Leaseholds—overwhelmed. And somewhere, somewhere, he imagined a triumphant whisper to Bert. I've 'ad 'er already. She's all right, my boy."

*Hubris*, I suppose the classical gentlemen would call it. The wedding dream unfolded. He learnt how the bride would slip away and put on her going-away dress. And I'd change too. They'd throw old slippers for luck.

"Then off we go. Shall it be gay Paree ? I've always had a dream. Someday, when you have learnt French too, we might have a teeny, weeny, little *ventre à terre* in Paris. . . ." Edward Albert suddenly put his foot down.

"Not to Paris we don't go. You'd start flirting again with that *faux pa* of yours. No fear."

"Jealous ! I like you to be jealous," said Evadne Evangelina. "If you saw him. So old. Debonair, I admit, but in the last stage. . . .

"Anyhow if you don't like that, there's all the world to

choose from. Let's go to Boulogne perhaps or down to lovely Torquay or Bournemouth to a room, *our room with the sun shining in on us ! Think of it.*"

He thought of it.

They went about to shops. Evadne was the most discriminating of shoppers. The gentlemen in black coats bowed obsequiously and rubbed their hands together. And she would turn to Edward Albert and consult him. They bought furniture. They bought a lovely soft fur rug "for our little pink toes", she whispered, "*a sauté lit*". And pictures, for the artist gentleman had taken away all his pictures.

She recognised one she was looking for with a cry of, "*Enfant saoul !*" It was a beautiful steel engraving of a tall lover, holding his new-won lady to him and pressing her fingers to his lips in the serene first moment of complete possession.

"I think it serch a lovely picture !" said Evadne Evangeline.

She feasted her eyes on it adoringly. "Darling," she whispered, when the salesman was out of earshot, "I'm counting the days. I'm counting the hours. To that."

In this fashion was our Edward Albert installed in his new home, and, at the propitious moment, Evangeline came, as she had promised him and herself, to give herself to him.

## CHAPTER II

### *Trap for Innocents*

**S**O, drawn by genuine passionate desire, our two heirs to the Wisdom of the Ages came to the cardinal moment of their sexual lives.

And here I find that for one brief chapter at least there has to be a change of key in this veracious narrative.

Hitherto this record of the acts and sayings of Edward Albert has been a simple unemotional record of the facts of the case, and if at times a certain realisation of the immanent

absurdity of his life has betrayed itself, it has, I hope, been kept for the most part below the level of derision. But what has to be told now of this young couple is something so pitiful that I find myself taking sides with them against the circumstances that brought them to this pass.

They were both, and Edward Albert more especially, profoundly ignorant of the essentials of sex. That beneficent writer, Mrs Marie Stopes, was already at large in the world about this time, but her instructions in the conditions of connubial happiness had still to penetrate to their class. She was still some years from becoming a sly music-hall joke. Edward Albert knew ; indeed he had exaggerated ideas ; of venereal disease, clumsy "precautions" and the repulsive aspects of the overwhelming desire for "It", but the only idea he attached to Maidenhead was that it was a town on the road to Reading with a pretty bridge overlooking Skindle's Hotel with a very attractive but rather high-class riverside lawn. And Evangeline for her part thought a loving maiden yielded with delight. Something happened, she knew, but she thought it was something happy.

He hardly waited to kiss her. There was a rapid struggle. She felt herself gripped and assailed with insane energy. "Oh ! oh ! oh !" she groaned in crescendo. "Stop ! Ow-woo-woohoo. Oooh !" The climax of the unendurable passed. Her body went limp.

Then Edward Albert was sitting up with an expression of horror on his face. "Gaw !" he was saying. "You got some disease ? It's blood ! "

He dashed for the bathroom.

He came back to discover Evangeline sitting up in a storm of pain, disappointment and fear.

"You pig," she said. "You fool. You selfish young fool. You ignoramus ! What have you done to me? . . . Look at that dirty precaution of yours there. *Look at it !*"

Her pointing beringed finger trembled.

"Gaw, I forgot all about it ! "

"And about me. And about everything. You foul, disgusting young hog."

" Well, 'ow was I to know? And anyhow 'ow about *me*? What have you done to *me*? "

" I wish to God I could give you worse than I've got. If I could strike you dead this minute I'd strike you dead. Get out of my way."

" Where you going? What you going to do? "

" Go. Dress. Wash. So far as I can wash. Get away out of sight of you. So as not to be sick."

She dressed swiftly, going to and fro and flinging insults at him. He sat on the soiled and devastated bed considering the situation.

" But wait a bit! " he said. " You can't go like this? "

" If this comes to anything—oh! if it comes to anything—oh! I'll do my best to *kill* you."

" But you can't leave me here——"

" I'll kill you and I'll kill myself. I swear it. I swear it."

" You can't leave me here in this place like this."

He followed her into the drawing-room and made to intercept her. And here is a queer thing to tell. Twenty minutes before she had been entirely powerless in his grip and yet now as he intervened between her and the door, she could face him with an expression of blazing hate, anger and contempt that was itself a blow. " Fool! " she spat out at his face. She clenched her fists, held them up to her ears, and suddenly shot them forward at his face with such force that she sent him spinning.

He spun round and sprawled anyhow. . . .

The door slammed on her and he found himself naked and entangled in an overturned chair on the floor of his new home and almost directly beneath that tender and beautiful picture, *Enfin seul*.

Poor little beasts! That was the dismal joke our Tewler civilisation played upon two of its children—for no reason at all. For sheer want of reason. It wrapped them about and misled them—to this. . . .

Evangeline wandered out into the square, ruffled, and distraught, and unspeakably uncomfortable. She hesitated, called a taxi and fled to her cousin, Millie Chaser, to tell her all

about it, for she felt she had to tell someone about it all or burst. Then she returned to Scartmore House and went supperless to bed. Edward Albert dressed slowly and still more slowly reassembled his scattered mentality.

He tried to simplify and concentrate it in hatred of her. He shouted a string of foul names at her. "She-devil", was the mildest thing he could think of to call her. "You come back, you foul bitch ! If I get you here again I'll show you."

He was affecting this fury and at the same time he was already desiring her again. It was exasperating, but he felt he had hardly begun upon her.

She had left red marks on both his cheeks. He examined them in the bathroom mirror with some consternation. Both would be bad bruises unless he sponged them with cold water, and one had the skin broken and was oozing blood.

"She took me by surprise. . . . Them rings of hers."

"Changed into a devil. . . . Hog, am I ?—selfish young hog ? Fool, eh ? Did she mean it all or only some ? . . . So that's where we stand. . . .

"I was a fool to let her go ! . . .

"She'd have torn the 'ouse down. . . .

"Wonder where she's gone to.

"Pretty fool I shall look if she goes back to her old job. If everything's all right. . . . She might do it."

## CHAPTER 12

### *Mr Pip Chaser*

IN spite of this mental turmoil Edward Albert slept profoundly that night, and the next morning he woke still extremely perplexed but refreshed and feeling much more able to cope with this difficult world. As he had nothing better to do he went for a walk in Regent's Park and sat down almost on the very seat on which he had discussed his future with

Evangeline eight or nine days before. And regardless of the tragedy of the previous day he found himself regretting her acutely.

For nearly two weeks she had subjected him to a regime of unprecedented mental massage, she had anointed him with flattery and endearment, and abruptly he was exposed to this cold and disillusioning world again. And the affair of yesterday was taking on a new appearance. Whatever happened he'd *had* it and done it. He was a man. He no longer peeped and peered at the girls and women going by. Their last secret was his. He looked at them appraisingly. But none of them, he realised, was quite like Evangeline. And the very violence and extravagance of his reaction against her made him feel he had by no means finished with her.

What was to be done about it? Walk about a bit. Have a look at the shops down Regent Street. Get a snack somewhere. Wait for something to happen.

In the afternoon he had an unanticipated visitor.

He answered the door expecting only some tradesman's call, and discovered a short but upstanding young man in a jauntily cocked bowler hat, an extremely neat black jacket, cheerful herring-bone trousers, and a bright bow tie that harmonised beautifully with a blue shirt and collar and matched exactly with the corner of a handkerchief that projected from the breast-pocket. The face was also up-standing, so to speak, clean-shaven, with alert brown eyes, a pug nose and a large oblique mouth ready to smile. A pink carnation in his button hole enhanced his cheerfulness. By Edward Albert's standards this was an excessively well-dressed person. He opened the door wider.

The visitor neighed. He produced a loud clear lingering *hey*. Then he spoke. "Mr Tewler?" he said.

"You want to see me?" said Edward Albert.

"Guessed it in one," said the visitor. "May I come in?"

Edward Albert stood aside to admit him.

"I didn't catch your name," he said. "If it's business——"

He remembered some recent instructions of Evangeline.  
"If you 'appen to have a card. . . ."

"And why *not* a card?" said the visitor. "Why not? I think, *hey*—yes." He produced a neat black leather pocket-book adorned with a silver monogram, and extracted a card.

"Don't be alarmed," he said.

Within a deep black edge it announced its purport :

to introduce  
Mr Philip Chaser  
representing Pontifex, Urn and Burke.  
Funerary Undertakers.

The visitor watched his host's face for a moment and then gave way to a brief cackle of laughter. "Not on business this time, Edward Albert, not on business. Purely social. It's the only card I have on me. You see I'm Pip Chaser at your service. Pip, Pip Chaser. I'm, *hey*, Evangeline's first cousin by marriage and my wife is her bosom friend. Old schoolfellows. You may have heard her speak of Millie—her *dear* Millie. Always *dear*. And her godfather, my revered parent. Nice chap he is—provided you don't call him Old Gooseberry. We marry from his place. Wedding breakfast and all that. I have to be Best Man. See? Came about the arrangements."

He removed his hat and revealed an upstanding tussock of hair. He seemed to find some difficulty about placing his hat. He held it in his hand until a suitable place could be found. "You ought to have a hatstand, Edward Albert," he said. "Hats and umbrellas. There." He pointed his hat to indicate the exact place. "You must get one and put it there. And now for a talk. Nice little place this looks. Well lit."

Edward Albert opened the door to the drawing-room.

"Would you like me to make you some tea?" he asked. "I can."

" Whisky is, *hey*, better," said Mr Chaser.

" I don't 'appen to *have* any whisky."

" Oh, but you *must* get a bottle of whisky in the pantry and all that. And cocktail stuff, gin, vermouth, lime juice, the, *hey*, requisites. What is home without a shaker? Don't worry about tea. We'll settle our business and go out for what is called, I believe, a quick one. I should have rung you up this morning, but you've got no telephone yet. You must get a telephone. And take my advice, don't put it out there in the hall for everyone to hear. In a corner near your desk. Bed-room extension perhaps. We'll fix places for that later. I—*hey*. I couldn't come this morning because I had two Blessed Ones to plant out at Woking. I had to get out of my—*hey*—sables."

He placed his hat with care and precision exactly in the middle of the table and seated himself gracefully with an arm over the back of his chair. Edward Albert found him admirable. He tried to imitate his ease and left him to open the conversation.

Mr Chaser reflected. Instead of coming to business, he embarked upon a monologue.

" This undertaking business of mine, Edward Albert, is—*hey*—it isn't all gloom. Don't think it. It's—*hey*—amusing. Something tonic in putting 'em under and going off yourself. Lot of nonsense talked about grief and lost dear ones and all that. If there hasn't been a quarrel of some sort, about the will or something, they're, they're—*hey*—just pulling long faces. Pulling 'em, Sir. Because they wouldn't be there if they weren't pulled. They're—*hey*—survivors again; they've got the better of another Departed. I want to go round and slap them on the back and tell 'em to—*hey*—laugh it off. Sometimes they do. I've seen a whole funeral in a fit of giggles. Little dog or something. Our business, of course, is to put a grave face on it; that's what we're paid for, so to speak. Put a grave face on it. See?"

" Grave face on it," said Edward Albert. " Good. Yes, that's good."

Mr Pip meditated, neighed at unusual length and went off at a tangent.

"In America, you know, they call undertakers Morticians. Over there they mess about with the body in a way the Christian West Enders *we* cater for wouldn't stand for a moment. Not for a moment. They make it up and dress it up and have a sort of lying-in-state, when friends call and leave cards. Not our line. It's done here in London by foreigners of sorts, but not by *us*. No."

He paused as though his monologue was running out. He smiled at Edward Albert most engagingly. He admitted he didn't know why he was talking of funerals. He could tell Edward Albert stories by the hour, but what they had to talk about was something more serious. If ever he wrote a book, he said, and he'd often thought of writing a book, he'd do one called *The Hearse with the Silver Lining*. Only it might interfere with business. . . .

"It *might* do that," said Edward Albert judicially.

"Well, we've business on hand and we have to come to it."

What was he going to say now? "Yeers," said Edward Albert guardedly, and sat up.

"A wedding, a wedding—*hey*—is something really serious. *Serious*. It just starts a lot of things and a funeral ends everything. It goes on. And on—*hey*. Now my cousin by marriage, Evangeline, says you're a fatherless orphan, so to speak. You haven't been anywhere and done anything *yet*. World is all before you. All sorts of matters, great and small, you've got to be put wise about. That's where this Best Man comes in. I *don't* mind telling you that, for many reasons, you're lucky to have me as your Best Man. I—*hey*—happen to be one of the best Best Men in London. Expert at it. I've—*hey*—guided scores—well, six or seven—to their doom. Anything you want to know, anything you have to do."

Still he seemed to be postponing something. He stood up, stuck his hands in his trouser pockets and walked about the room with one eye on Edward Albert.

"Nice little place you have here. Quite a nice little place. Broken a chair already! Hire purchase stuff. By the time you've bought it you'll have replaced most of it. And you've got that old picture; *Enfin seul*. Leighton, isn't it?"

"About this wedding of ours," began Edward Albert. Young Chaser came round on his heel and stood attentive.

"What about it?"

"Fact is, Mr Philip——"

"Pip to you my boy—Pip, Pip."

"But about all this. Fact is—I ought to tell you—we've had a bit of a misunderstanding."

"My wife did say something of the sort while I was shedding my sad rags and putting on these—*hey*—innocently glad ones. Some storm in a tea-cup. Don't think about it. Don't—*hey*—think about it. These little disturbances will occur. Before a wedding there's more often trouble than not. Much more often than not. The engagement has been postponed. You see it in *The Times*. That's where the undertaker scores. No going back in *his* business. Death certificate all in order before we think of touching you."

"What did Mrs Chaser say?"

"Nothing much. Some little rumpus. You've offended Evangeline in some way."

"We sort of." [Difficult to convey.] "Just kind of didn't hit things off."

Pip looked at his protégé and perceived he was blushing deeply. He looked younger and sillier than ever.

"I wasn't born yesterday, my boy," said Pip Chaser. "Say no more about it. Think no more about it. The crisis of yesterday is the joke of to-morrow. You'd be only too glad to see her coming in now? Admit it. You've got to let the woman have her own way about—*hey*—certain matters, particularly at first. Agree to that and back she'll come. Right away. Agree, eh? Nothing more to be said. Right!"

He reported the state of affairs to his wife. "I thought it was that," he said, when she had supplied details. "I don't remember you and I had any particular trouble. . . ."

"*You* were born knowing," said Millie Chaser. "And you've never left off clucking since. I'll tell her. She's upstairs now. . . ."

"He wants you to come back," said Millie.

Evangeline had been reading the *Princess Priscilla's Fortnight*. She put it on one side with an affectation of regret. . . . "Does he say he's sorry? He's got to say he's sorry."

"He does."

"Let's be clear about things. That boy's a positive danger. I'm half way to hating him and if he isn't careful about it, I shall. I'm going to have a separate room. I'm going to—I'm going to have a voice in disposing of myself. Always. After what's happened I simply murst, Millie."

"Pip says he knows he's been an idiot and he's absolutely sheepish."

"Sheepish? H'm. What sort of sheep? He's got to be a lamb if we're to get on together."

"Then you'll go back and have a talk to him?"

Edward Albert was out when she returned. He had gone out to order some whisky and siphons. The incapable little lady let her in without comment. So that he found her in possession when he returned.

He had told himself that when he got her back to their home he would do thus and thus with her, but when he found himself face to face with her, suddenly all that masterful knocking about he had contemplated became improbable.

"Well?" she said.

He felt danger in her eye.

He made a step towards her. "I'm glad you're back," he said. "I been *wanting* you back."

"Stop," she said. "Stop a minute, Teddy. Keep off. Listen. Keep your hands off me. If you think I'm going to let a clumsy kid like you manhandle me again!"

Something flashed on the table.

"What's that?"

"That, my dear, is the bread knife. If you start a scuffle, anything may happen. And who will know which of us began it? See? I *mean* it, Teddy."

She read fear in his expressive face and knew that for the moment at least she had won the upper hand. A fair residuum of affectionate proprietorship mingled with her contempt for him. And in her awakened body now there was desire.

"Listen," she said. "I murst remind you that you are a youngster, six years younger than me. It's painful but I murst. You don't *know* things, you don't understand things. That's not your fault and it isn't mine. It happens to be so. In ten years' time it won't matter about your being younger, but it does now. You'll be the master then right enough. No doubt. See? But you do as I say now and it will be the better for both of us."

"What's all this 'doing as you say' mean?"

"Behaving like a lover and not like a beastly uncontrollable little animal. That's what I mean."

"But 'ow?"

"You don't know and you murst trust me to show you."

"I s'pose I got to do what you say. But what do you want me to do?"

"Be the modest lover you were at the beginning."

"Am I to *live* on my bended knees?"

"You do as I say and you can come to bed with me now."

"Eh?"

"I mean it." And suddenly this astonishing creature came round the table to him, put her arm about him, drew him to her, and kissed him. He responded automatically.

She drew him towards her room. . . .

"We don't know yet if the worst has happened, so you murst take care, Teddy. . . ."

He was still marvelling wordlessly at the ways of women when she left the house.

"Changeable," he reflected. "Don't know her own mind ten minutes together. All love and kisses, cut and come again, and then—pushed away—you'd 'ardly think we'd ever made love."

She said very little about the wedding day for another week or so, and then she informed him abruptly that the sooner they married the better.

"What's the sudden hurry?" asked Edward Albert.

"*Fate accomplished*. I know now we've *got* to marry and that's all about it."

"That means a kid," said Edward Albert, who had been

thinking things over for some days. And the more he had thought them over the less he had liked them.

"That means a kid," he repeated.

"It means, as you say, a kid."

"And you—all spoilt. Nurses and sickness. All the 'ouse upset and then the kid—nya, nya, nya."

"And what else did you expect?"

"I 'oped we'd be able to go on going on as we 'ave been going on. For a bit anyhow."

"I've felt you '*oped*'—hoped that. Well, we can't."

She watched his crestfallen face. "Just for one careless moment, Teddy. What a lesson for you! You can't be too careful."

But Edward Albert wasn't going to admit responsibility.

"I been '*ad*,'" he said. "If ever a man was '*ad*', I been '*ad*'. From the moment I got that blarsted money. I wish I'd never set eyes on it. Or you."

She shrugged her shoulders and said nothing. What was there for her to say?

## CHAPTER 13

### *Wedding Deferred*

WHY did Mr Philip Chaser neigh as well as employ ordinary human speech? It was a matter for speculation among his large circle of friends and acquaintances. Was he born neighing, did he learn to neigh, or was neighing thrust upon him? Even his dear Millie had no exact knowledge in the matter. When she met and married him, it had already become an essential part of his personality.

There may have been an early stammer and a cure for stammering. Hold your breath for a time, inhale and then speak; the stammer went, and the neigh remained in its place. Observers found it was not an invariable feature of his discourse. He could forget to do it in moments of lively interest. He used it to capture attention. At social gather-

ings, used loudly, it was as good as the toast-master's "Pray silence for—so and so". And it gave him a rallying pause. It arrested interruption while he recovered a train of thought, and it warned that something good was coming. He just did it; he never said anything about it. He had a profoundly secretive side to him.

We imagine a number of things about language and most of them are absurd. We imagine we are speaking plainly and clearly and we never do anything of the sort. We do not hear the sounds we make. We think we think and express ourselves. It is our universal delusion. The speech of *Homo Tewier*, *Homo sub-sapiens*, is still incapable of expressing reality, and his thought at its clearest is a net of misfitting symbols, analogies and metaphors, by which he hopes to ensnare the truth to his desires. If you will listen attentively, if you will read attentively, you will find everyone has protective and habitual mannerisms, makes the most transitory attempts at real expression and lapses into the tricks and devices of—hey—something far more natural, a struggle for self-assertion.

It is only in the past few years that the sciences of Significs and Semantics have opened men's eyes to the immense inaccuracies and question-begging of language. People talk of pure English, perfect French, faultless German. This possible impeccability is an academic delusion. Only a schoolmaster can really believe in it. Every language changes from day to day and from hour to hour. I am told by those who are better able to judge that Evangeline's transitory French was far from perfect, gradually it decayed in her memory and passed out of her mind, but it differed only in degree and not in kind from everyman's French, including this, that and the other sort of Frenchman. Some day ingenious people may devise ways of bringing language which is not only the expression but the instrument of thought, nearer to verifiable reality—in the days when we Tewlers are breaking towards *sapiens*. But that is not yet.

Meanwhile speech is mainly our weapon for self-assertion, and from that point of view there is nothing better in this

story than Pip Chaser's long, aggressive, commanding and yet apparently impersonal *hey*. How feeble beside it was Edward Albert's "Er—mean t'say". How spurious those long records of empty phrasing with which the public speaker holds his audience in a state of passive nothingness while he recovers the straying argument that has slipped away from his wits!

The last thing a speaker or writer can perceive is his own limitation, and with that the critical hearer and reader must deal. In this story, subject to that qualification, there is a sustained attempt to render life, and particularly one specimen life and group of lives, as starkly as possible, and every individual is shown as truthfully as the writer's ability permits. And they all, in addition to a general laxness, have their peculiar phrasing and mannerisms and patches of verbal shoddy. Every one of them and everyone you know.

So *hey* for the merry merry Best Man!

He spent the eve of the appointed day in a vigorous rehearsal of Edward Albert. He had thrown himself into the task with an ever-growing enthusiasm. He found something delightful in our hero which was evidently lost upon the rest of the world. And he loved management. He was born knowing, as his wife said, he had never once looked back from that bright start, and he had an extraordinary detailed knowledge of where and when and how to buy the smartest things at the lowest price for every occasion.

"We'll have this *right* to the last button, Teddy. We'll get photographers from the society papers outside the church. I know a man. . . . How are *they* to know who we are and who we aren't? . . . Oh, *you'll* be all right, if you don't give way in the middle. Like—*hey*—shutting a knife, I mean."

He paraded himself and Edward Albert up and down the bedroom. He took his arm and spun him round to the looking-glass. "Look at us! Pip and Tewler, arrayed for the altar. What's a funeral to this sort of thing? I ask you."

"You know I didn't count on all this."

"Exactly. That's where *I* come in. Now then, my orphan

child, that speech—— Just once more. Now then 'Ladies and Gentlemen.' "

He was very proud of the speech he had composed for his pupil. "None of your Unaccustomed-as-I-am-to-public-speaking stuff for us. No. Something simple, neat and natural. Stand up to the table, so. Now then."

Edward Albert posed himself at the table. "Lays and gentlemen," he said and paused. "And you, my dear Evangeline——"

"Good!"

"Er. I never made a speech in my life. P'raps I never shall. And now. My heart's too full. Go' bless you all."

"Excellent! Touching! Then you sit down. My revered Pop—he doesn't mind being called Pop; it's Old Gooseberry he can't stand—my Pop, I say, will blow his cork out and spout all over us for a bit. After all it's *his* breakfast. And then kisses. Millie will kiss you. Various women will kiss you—attaboy—I'll pull you out of it, and so to the station and Tender Torquay!"

"You'll see us off?"

"To the end. . . . And now let me help you to spread out the wedding garments. Your blue suit will be on the Pop Premises. . . . Have I forgotten anything? Not me. What would have happened to this blessed wedding without my *savoir faire* transcends the imagination—transcends it, I tell you, simply *transcends* it."

Edward Albert sneezed.

"Where's your dressing gown? Every man in your position ought to have a wadded dressing gown."

"I bin shivering all day. I think I got a cold."

"That's where that whisky comes in, my boy. Lemon? No lemon! You ought *always* to have a lemon. Get into bed. I'll get you some boiling water and then I'll tuck you up. Best man indeed! I'm your nurse and your valet. Say your evening prayer. Go on. Ladies and gentlemen and you, my dear Evangeline, I never made a speech in my life. Go on. . . . Good! Now for the whisky, oh Lamb made ready for the Sacrifice. . . .

"I'll leave it here beside you. And so to sleep, my Benedict. Sleep well."

But that was exactly what Edward Albert could not do. A great horror of darkness and self-disgust came upon him.

Something about Pip, something about everybody's behaviour, told him he was being made a fool of. He had been in Evangeline's arms again that afternoon and he was in a phase of nervous exhaustion. He had been excited and then told he was no good. Always she was saying he was unsatisfactory. Nice thing to tell a fellow. And egging him on again. And here he was to be dressed up like a fool. . . . He wouldn't stand it. He would not stand it. He would be damned if he stood it. He was a free man in a free country. Smash up the whole thing he would even now, and be damned to their wedding breakfast !

He got out of bed. He sneezed violently. He'd smash that hat anyhow. But face to face with that immaculate hat, his heart failed him. It found the cringing snob in him. He crept back into bed and sat up for a time looking at it. But in an hour he was raving again and repeating his invincible objection to marrying. He'd been led into it. He'd been '*ad.* It wasn't what he'd meant. . . .

Mr Pip, dressed as the ideal best man, was a little late and impatient. He had a white gardenia in his button hole and he carried another, with its stem in silver paper, for his victim. He rang for ten minutes almost continuously ; he banged and kicked the door, and he was at last admitted by Edward Albert in pyjamas. The bridegroom's eyes were red, swollen and half-closed, he said nothing, and he scuttled back hastily to bed.

"What on earth's *this* ?" demanded Mr Pip, round-eyed.

Edward Albert rolled over away from him and became a bunch of bedclothes.

"I can't do it, o' fellow," he wheezed hoarsely. "I got a frightful cold. You got to manage without me."

"Say that again," cried Pip, incredulous but delighted.  
"Say that again."

Edward Albert said it again but lower and more wheezily.

" You got to manage without me ! " echoed Pip. " Oh lovely ! Oh perfect ! Of all the larks ! "

He cackled with laughter. He danced about the room. He waved his arms about. " I can see them. I can see them all. Managing without him ! " He aimed two tremendous punches at the roll of bedclothes that was the bridegroom and then went off to the pantry in search of whisky.

He came back with a glass of whisky and soda in his hand and put it down on the night table to enable him to punch the defaulter some more. " Oh Lord ! what are we to *do* ? " he said. " You, *hey, toad.*"

" Bring 'em all here," he tried. " Get the parson and the bride and everyone here. Not legal. Get an ambulance and take you *there*. What's the time ? Past eleven. You can't marry after twelve. Get you up now and dress you by force ? Get up ! "

He tried to strip off the bedclothes but Edward Albert had wrapped them too tightly round himself.

" I tell you I *won't*," he shouted. " I can't and I won't. I won't. I changed my mind."

Pip desisted.

" Ever had the pleasure of meeting Inspector Birkenhead, Tewler ? " he asked.

" Don' wan' meet 'im."

" You will."

Then Pip had his brightest idea. " I know. You've got a temperature of 105, Tewler, and I'm going to telephone. They'll send for a doctor—who'll expose you. And then ? I don't know. God help you ! Why the hell haven't you had a telephone put in here ? As I told you. I'll have to go out to a call office."

When the flat had ceased to reverberate with Pip's presence, Edward Albert rolled up into a vertical position, a sort of cocoon of bedclothes surmounted by a rueful face and a disorder of hair, and finished Pip's whisky and soda.

" I never thought of that old father," he whispered, and his face was white with premonition.

## CHAPTER 14

*Fizz Pop*

INSPECTOR BIRKENHEAD looked like the quint-essence of all those Scotland Yard Inspectors who have figured in that vast and ever-growing field of literature, detective stories. He was indeed the only begetter of a great family. His position at Scotland Yard brought him into immediate contact with all the journalists, writers, curious persons and so forth who came in ever-increasing volume to study the type. He was Scotland Yard's first line of defence, and the first to break cover from the thickets upon the encircled criminal. Subtler minds up-stairs remained hidden from the public eye and the public imagination. Criminals never saw them, knew nothing about them. Camera men never got hold of them. Between them and the amateur detective, a great gulf, in the shape of Inspector Birkenhead, was fixed. Edward Albert had met him already in a dozen stories under a dozen names.

The Inspector was a big heavy man, big enough indeed to be a lot of people. Edward Albert watched him place a chair for himself in the middle of the room and adjust himself firmly to its creaking accommodation, rest his hands upon his thighs and stick out his elbows. "Edward Albert Tewler, I believe?" he said.

There is no hiding things from these detectives.

"Yes," said Edward Albert and the word half choked him. His mouth was dry with fear.

He glanced in hope of some moral support from Pip, but Pip appeared to be lost in admiration of *Enfin Seul*.

"I'm told you engaged to marry my daughter and that at the very last moment when everything was prepared for the ceremony, you insulted her and everybody by absenting yourself, absenting yourself without leave, from the ceremony. Have I been correctly informed?"

"I really did 'ave a temperature, Sir. Over 104 it was. Five degrees above normal."

"Nothing to what you'll have some day," said the Inspector prosaically.

"But Mr Chaser there knows—— Reely, Sir."

"We won't argue about that. We won't trouble Mr Chaser about that. I should say by the look of you she was well out of a thoroughly silly marriage, if it wasn't——"

The Inspector stopped, unable to continue for a time. His face was suffused. His mouth closed grimly and he appeared to be inhaling intensely. His eyes protruded. He seemed to be swelling. He must have been full of very highly compressed air. It looked as though he might explode at any moment, but as a matter of fact he was exercising self-control.

Mr Pip Chaser had stopped looking at the picture and had come round to a position from which to observe the Inspector better. Even his expression of expectant amusement was mitigated by a touch of awe. There was, if one may say so, a sort of humming silence of apprehension throughout the room. What became of all that air it is idle to speculate. It disappears from this story. When the Inspector spoke his voice was calm and stern. He deflated imperceptibly.

"My daughter, if she is my daughter, was her mother's child. That woman—— That woman brought disgrace upon my name. A wanton. A loose woman. And now. . . . Once again. No, I cannot have that sort of thing happen over again."

"But I mean to marry her, Sir. I'm going to marry her."

"You'd better. If you don't——" And speaking as always, with the quiet dignity of a man accustomed to the use of studiously irreproachable language, he used these by no means irreproachable words: "I'll bloody-well knock your silly block off for you. You understand me, Sir?"

"Yessir," said Edward Albert.

"But then how are we going to do it? The mischief is done. Here's everything disarranged and out of order. All her friends will know and talk. Well, Mr Chaser, you've a way of arranging things, she says, she says you can arrange anything; and you know all these people better than I do.

How you can arrange this now passes my imagination.  
What's to be done?"

"Well," said Pip. "If you ask me——"

He came forward and stood for a moment with his mouth wide open, scratching his jaws. "Hey", he said, slowly and extensively. "Nothing irreparable has happened. First there's this lie about the temperature."

Edward Albert murmured a protest.

"Lie?!" said the Inspector, looked hard at Edward Albert, and said no more.

"Pure lie," said Pip. "I invented it and I ought to know. He hadn't a temperature. He had—*hey*—cold feet. . . . Still, we ought to keep that up. And the sooner Evangeline shows anxiety about it, the better. We can say she's been round already, in a dreadful state of mind. Oh, I know that's not true, but—*hey*—we can say it. And then we can say there was a misunderstanding about the date. And *I* lost the ring and got confused. Blame it on to me. That's what Best Men are for. Any old story, and the more stories there are, the better. We contradict vaguely. We say to this man, 'the fact of the matter is *this*', and we say to that man, 'the fact of the matter is *that*'. So everybody knows more than everybody else and we escape in the confusion. Just—*hey*—common sense, all that. The facts are bad. As you know, Sir, as your criminals know, the worse the facts are the more they have to be jumbled up. We aren't going to have *you* sifting the evidence, Sir, thank goodness. And the sooner we get the whole thing over, the better."

"There I agree," said the Inspector. "I stand by that firmly."

"I'll get busy," said Puck-Pip. "I'll do it."

"But if there's any more shilly-shally——"

"Block," said Pip compactly, and turned to his client. "You understand that, don't you?"

Edward Albert nodded acquiescence.

The Inspector stood up slowly and towered over his prospective son-in-law. He shook not so much a finger as the whole terror of Scotland Yard at him.

" That girl is going to be decently and properly married, whether she likes it or not, whether you like it or not, whoever likes it or don't like it "—he hesitated—" or not. Not twice will I have the honour of my family trailed in the mud. You marry her and you treat her properly. She's got the temper of a vixen, I admit, but all the same she's an educated young lady, and don't you forget it. She's a young lady and you're no gentleman. . . . "

He ceased to address Edward Albert. He soliloquised, looking over Pip's head.

" I've often thought if perhaps I'd spanked her at times . . . Or somebody had spanked her. I couldn't have spanked her. . . . But there I was without a woman to care for her. . . . It's no good crying over spilt milk. As a little kid. . . . If only she could have stayed always as a little kid. . . . She was such a bright little kid."

The lament of the father through the ages. . . .

So in a confusion of explanations the wedding feast was restored to the calendar and in due course Edward Albert found himself standing with Evangeline before a clergyman of venerable appearance and rapid enunciation. Pip stood behind Edward Albert like a ventriloquist behind his dummy, and three small bridesmaids of unknown provenance upheld Evangeline's train. In a front pew stood Inspector Birkenhead, meticulously observant, and evidently resolved to knock the bridegroom's sanguinary block off at the slightest hint of hanky-panky.

The elderly clergyman went off at headlong speed. " Debloved getggether 'n sigh Gard 'n face congation join togeth man this wum ho' matmony onble sta stuted Gard time man's 'sincy. . . . dained remdy gainsin void fornication. . . . f'ever after holdis peace."

More of that. . . .

Then suddenly Edward Albert found he was being addressed. The quick-firing clergyman was saying, " Wilt have this Wom thy wed wife . . . keep th'only unt her—s'long both sha' live ? "

" Eh ? " said Edward Albert, trying to get it clear.

"Say 'I will'" from Pip.

"I will."

Hose turned on Evangeline who answered very clearly ; "I will."

"Who giv' s'wom mad this man ? "

Rapid exchange of glances between the Inspector and Pip. Assenting noise from the Inspector and something very like "O.K." from Mr Chaser, who reached over smartly and put Evangeline's hand in the priest's. There was a slight fumble and the priest, with an impatient tug, joined the two right hands as he proceeded. He was already well away with "Peat after me. Was' name ? "

"Edward Albert Tewler, Sir."

"I, Edward Albert Tewler, take thee, was' name ? "

"Evangeline Birkenhead."

"Vangline Birk'ned to wed wife. . . ."

Things drew to a climax.

"Whe's ring ? " Senile impatience manifested. But young Chaser was fully up to his duties. "Here, Sir. Yes, Sir, all correct."

"On her finger."

"Fourth finger—you *chump*," from Pip in an audible whisper, and found it for him. "Don't drop it."

"Peat aft me. 'This ring Ivy wed. . . .'"

"Kneel," hissed Pip, with a slight but helpful kick.

And so the beautiful old ceremony drew to its end. Prayers and responses were mumbled by Edward Albert out of a prayer-book suddenly handed to him. There was more lightning discourse and then Edward Albert was walking down the aisle, with Evangeline clinging firmly to his arm, to the supply organist's interpretation of the Wedding March from *Lohengrin*.

"Splendid," whispered Pip. "Splendid. I'm proud of you. *Chin up !*"

So far as he had any feeling left in him, Edward Albert was proud of himself.

A crowd of strange faces outside. Damn ! He'd forgotten to let Leaseholds know. He'd forgotten to tell Bert. Pip

was handing him his hat and clapping him into the first carriage. It was a black-lined carriage, but the coal-black horses were mitigated by abundant white rosettes. . . .

Edward Albert exhaled noisily. Evangeline remained perfectly still.

"Hey!" said Pip, realising that something had to be said about it: "That was—magnificent. *Magnificent.*"

"The flowers were beautiful," said Evangeline.

"Pop," said Pip.

Then they were going into the house of Pop Chaser.

It was, Edward Albert realised, a stylish house, and it was doing itself in the best style. He had never seen such a lot of flowers except at a flower show before. And there were special maids in uniform caps and aprons to take hats and coats and things. A very young gentleman friend of the family dressed like a cadet shop-walker, acted as usher. The bridesmaids reappeared as sisterlets of Pip's. There was a roomful of people. "Re-hey-ception," said Pip. "Smile at 'em. That's better. This way."

Mrs Doober was saying something, then an unknown lady in an autobiographical mood was thrust aside. Then a big fat chap was kissing the bride with remarkable gusto. He disentangled himself and displayed a broad flushed face rather like Pip's, but stuffed with intercalary matter, and he was white-haired. "And so this is the lucky man, eh?"

"Congratulations, my boy. "Con-gratulations. You carry off my family treasure and I congratulate you. Well, s'long as she's happy. . . ."

He held out a capacious hand.

Edward Albert was at a loss for words. He allowed his hand to be shaken.

"You're welcome," said Pop Chaser. "And you've got the sunshine on your wedding."

"I 'ave got that," said Edward Albert.

"I didn't come to the church in person," said Pop Chaser, "but I was there in spirit."

"Your lovely flowers," said Evangeline.

"And my lovely Son, eh?"

"I must say it's a perfectly lovely wedding. Isn't it, Teddy dear?"

"I'm enjoying it all right," said Edward Albert.

"Aah!" said Mr Chaser, and held out his large hand to a vigorously dressed plump lady. "So glad *you've* come. Your flowers and my champagne. . . ."

Evangeline pulled her spouse aside.

"He's doing it all splendidly. Isn't he, darling? You ought to thank him. Perhaps if you put a sentence in your speech—just at the end."

Edward Albert looked alarmed. "What d'you think? 'Feel I can't sit down without a word of thanks'?"

"Generosity and Hospitality," whispered Evangeline. "Perfect. You're a dear."

They were separated again.

Everything was moving very fast, after the fashion of wedding breakfasts. The dining-room was full of flowers again and champagne bottles had been liberally distributed about the board. A great clatter of knives and forks began. Corks popped and tongues were unloosed. But Edward Albert could not eat. His lips moved. "Lays and gem'n and you my *dear* Evangeline. I never made a speech'n my life." He drank off the bubbling glass beside him and felt a rush of small needles to his nose. But it seemed to give him heart and confidence. Someone refilled his glass. "Not too much," said Pip, close at hand and alert.

Nearer and nearer crept the moment.

"Ori," he said, and stood up.

"Lays and gem'n, me dear Vanger. Nevangeline. *You* Nevangeline." Pause.

Prompter: "never made a speech in my life."

Rapidly, "Ne-ma-speech m'lfe. *Wha?* . . .

"Now harsh too full. Go bless y'awl."

Loud and sustained applause. "Siddown," said Pip, but the bridegroom remained standing. His eye was fixed on the bride.

"Feel I carn sit down 'vout a word thanks. Pop. Pop Goose——"

Pip had bit him violently on the back and was standing up beside him.

"*Hey,*" he neighed out at the top of his voice. "Magnificent speech. Magnificent. Excellent." He forced Edward Albert down into his chair. He waved a glass of champagne dangerously, and spilt some down Edward Albert's vest. "Ladies and Gentlemen, the bride and bridegroom. Our love to them, our good wishes. Hip, Hip, Hurrah."

Confused applause followed. There seemed to be some hesitation. Glasses were held towards Edward Albert and Evangeline. Old Mr Chaser was addressing his son in protesting tones. "Stick to the programme, Pip," he was saying. "Where *are* we? What's come over you? You 'aven't got drunk, my boy, by any chance, 'ave you?"

"Sorry, Pop! Drunk with happiness. *Hey. Happiness.*"

A pause. Then old Chaser rose to his feet prepared for oratory. Some great danger—no one but Pip was quite clear what it was—had threatened the festival—and passed.

"Ladies and gen'men, Mr Tewler and my dear girl," said old Chaser, "it gives me great pleasure to-day, to welcome and entertain you here to-day at the nuptials, the nuptials, of one who is and will be I hope always dear to us all, my dear, bright, clever, good god-child Evangeline. I feel I am 'anding over to-day a very loving and precious Treasure to my young friend Tewler, *our* young friend Tewler. . . ."

"Did I say something wrong?" whispered Edward Albert to his faithful dragoman.

"Did you say something wrong? Lucky I haven't a weak heart or I'd be dead this moment." He neighed pianissimo. "Listen to the speaker. Go easy, that champagne."

Edward Albert turned a face of deliberate attention to the speech.

"There have been things said and insinuated. The less said about that the better. There 'ave been misunderstandings and they 'ave, to put it plainly, been misunderstood. For all that and all that, all's well that ends well. I am very 'appy to-day to see 'ere at my table a very great and distinguished figure in our London life, no less a man than the celebrated

Inspector Birkenhead." Applause. "He stands for all that keeps us from being robbed and murdered in our beds. But. . . . Unhappily, unhappily—"

Pause of expectation.

"I 'ave to report a new crime to 'im, a robbery."

Sensation.

"'Is own daughter, Evangeline, is the criminal. She 'as stolen all our 'earts and—"

The rest of the sentence was lost in riotous applause and table-banging. Somebody broke a glass unreproved. The only word audible was the concluding word, "Torquay". Pop Chaser was radiant with oratorical success, and Pip Chaser was slapping him on the back. Apparently the old man had either not heard Edward Albert's little slip of the tongue or forgotten it, and Edward Albert himself began to doubt whether it had really occurred. He drained a new-filled beaded glass towards his host before Pip could prevent him. . . .

## CHAPTER 15

### *Man and Wife*

"COURAGE!" said Pip, "Be—hey—good to her!" waving to the outgoing train. He slid out of sight past the windows and the young couple were off for their honeymoon. . . .

Edward Albert had slumped into his seat. "Wish I knew who flew that last slipper," he said. "All bruised I am. Someone must've delib'rately buzzed it straight at my face. Ugh!"

He shut his eyes.

"Married," he said, and said no more.

She seated herself diametrically opposite to him.

For a time they sat in silence.

She was perplexed by a disconcerting little incident that had just occurred. A radiant railway official had taken them in charge, led them along the platform and ushered

them to their reserved compartment. "Wish you all happiness," he said, and stood waiting. Edward Albert looked in dull interrogation at his bride. "Wants a tip, I s'pose," he said, fumbled in his pocket and produced six-pence. The man stared at the coin with a hostile expression and made no movement. Matters hung in suspense.

"All right Evangeline! My affair," said Pip, and had drawn the resentful official out of the apartment and brightened his face on the platform.

"I suppose" (hiccup) "I can do what I like with my own money," said Edward Albert answering her unspoken protest.

"But he expected more. Dressed up as we are! He looked so astonished and hurt. He didn't *like* you, Teddy."

"Well, I didn't like *is* face either."

He seemed to think the incident concluded.

But this assertion that he meant to do what he liked with his own money came as a clear definition of a disposition already very plainly apparent. He had evidently been thinking things over and he had got one reality very clear in his mind. He had the power of the purse. He had insisted on paying himself for every incidental expense for which Pip had not provided already. (Pip's bill was to come in later.) Evangeline studied his sulky face across the carriage. Edward Albert had never been drunk before and the temporary exhilaration of Old Gooseberry was apt to be followed by an uncomfortable obstinacy.

Her immediate disposition was to leave him alone.

But for some days she had been anticipating this moment and preparing a little speech for him, that would re-adjust their relations on a saner basis. And that former resolution was still sufficiently strong to prevail over her discretion. "Teddy," she said, "Listen to me."

He did not open his eyes. "Wassit?" he asked.

"Teddy, we've got to make the best of all this. I was a fool to fall in love with you in the first place—oh, yes, I was in love with you right enough—but I fell out quicker than I fell in. Kidnapping—she said. What was her name? Blame.

*Détournement des Mineurs.* Are you listening? Face things as they are. You're young, Teddy, even for your years. And I'm a grown-up woman."

"Don' wan' argue. Thing's done s'done. Wish I knew who chucked that slipper. . . . Couldn't have been old Pip. . . . Pip wount done thin' like *that*."

Nothing more to be said. She sat back, disregarding him. She felt intolerably sober. She wished she had let herself go like the rest of them with *Veuve Gooseberry*. She tried to reassemble her ideas. She had entered upon a new sort of life in which there would be no weekly pay day. She had never thought of that before and at the time the prospect scared her unduly. . . .

She went out into the corridor and contemplated the flying landscape. She looked over her shoulder and then resorted to the privacy of the lavatory. There she counted her available money. She had £2. 11s. 6d. Not much. And no more to come.

She returned to their apartment.

He had shifted. He was in the middle of the carriage now with his hands on the seat arms and he was making a queer noise between snoring and sobbing. He was partly asleep and wholly drunk. She stood for a long time regarding him. "*Tu l'as voulu, Georges* what is it?—*Dindon?*—*Chose?*" she whispered to herself. "He used to say that and laugh at me." And then, "What was that other one he used to laugh at? As a girl falls so shall she lie. . . . Nothing to laugh at now."

Well, she was in a fix and somehow she would get out of it. When one looked at her antagonist, there was nothing really for admirable about him. She glanced at the panel of looking-glass above the back of the seat and she realised that her grey going-away dress suited her very well. She nodded to her reflection reassuringly.

She posed to herself, admiring and sympathising with herself. She saw herself brilliant, generous, passionate, unfortunate and still undaunted.

"I've got no right to hate him," she said. "But it's going to be hard not to. This money business. That's something

new. Evadne, my dear, you never dreamt of that. Somehow that must be put straight. Think it out. Put him to bed to-night and talk sense to him to-morrow."

At Torquay Station she felt she had the situation well in hand. She got the porters tipped generously by saying, "His fee is half a crown," and she settled handsomely with the cabdriver by the same device. "Thish Torquay don't arf charge," said her spouse.

"Nothing is dear if it's good," she said, partly to him and partly to the hotel porter.

And having pacified her lord and sent him to sleep, she lay awake beside him in a reverie.

Before her acutely wakeful mind passed a pageant of beautiful women down the ages who had had to give their bodies to dwarfed kings and ugly feudal lords, rich merchants, influential statesmen, millionaires, with far less desire than had served her turn. And all the women in this procession were strangely alike; reasonably tall, bright-eyed, with shadowy black hair and a dark warmth of skin; each indeed was her own dream-self in a thousand lovely costumes, sacrificial always but still proud and self-contained. One lady on a white horse, however, wore no costume at all, Lady Godiva. Venus the prey of Vulcan also, was scanty. Anne Boleyn was rich by contrast. A splendid figure was Esther, purified, anointed, and in robes of the utmost frankness and splendour, jingling like a sistrum, going into the King, conquering by her dark loveliness, conquering by submission. Always she submitted rather than gave, holding back a precious jewel of self-abandonment that was hers, her own unexplored essence. She controlled the brute for fine and generous ends.

Was this after all what wifehood amounted to?

For most women perhaps—yes.

Was there ever a true love between husband and wife? There was obligation in it and obligation kills love. There was an excessive proximity. You saw the creature too closely. The advantage of an *amant* was that you didn't have to live with him.

There was someone she had been trying to forget, but the word *amant* translated itself into English and the desire for love flooded her being. . . . True love. . . .

Her imaginative posturing came to an end. She stared hard at the darkness for some moments and then moaned weakly and began to weep and weep silently; "Oh my dear," she whispered, "Oh my *dear*." She let herself weep, and it comforted her greatly.

The morning found her restored to her normal self and prepared even to enjoy Torquay. She had thought of all sorts of things that revolutionised the situation. She slipped out of bed and into a Parisian dressing-gown, went to look at the sea—lovely!—rang and demanded a "*chocolate complet*" and explained that "*M'sieu mangera Plutarch*". Then, recalled to Old England at the maid's stare, she translated, "One chocolate and rolls and butter. My husband is still asleep." He might, she reflected, have the monopoly of payment, but nothing here could prevent her giving orders.

She dressed and as she dressed she revised that speech she had composed in the train. She would say it all later in the day, when he was washed and penitent. There was an aftermath of penitence in that champagne. It was his first experience of getting drunk, and she knew there was a state called having a head and a mouth, when fallen humanity craves for a cool hand on its brow. She wished she knew more about pick-me-ups.

She would go down and find out in the bar.

All that worked out admirably. The barman was understanding and charming. She tried a cocktail he said he had invented. It cleared and invigorated the spirit. She did a very unusual thing for her. She had another.

In the afternoon she was able to deliver her little speech from under a sunshade that she held over her husband's head in the hotel gardens, and win his depressed but unresisting agreement.

Should she say a word about the money? Not a word until they went back to London and she began housekeeping.

This they did precipitately when Edward Albert received the first week's bill.

It was rather a big bill, but then they were having their honeymoon. To him it seemed unspeakably vast. By all his available means it was overwhelmingly vast. He examined it incredulously.

"Why do they call it the King's Suite?"

"They flatter themselves they are doing us well."

"Doing us *well!*!" His face was white and damp with perspiration. He was too appalled to shout. "Doing us!" he whispered.

"Wot's this—this porter's account? That's that big busybody downstairs."

"He paid for a few things I bought in the shops. It's how they do in hotels." She glanced at the bill. "That's all quite correct," she said.

"Hairdresser? Manicure?"

"Downstairs in the hotel."

"Gordormighty!" said Edward Albert, using Nuts MacBryde's once terrifying expletive without a qualm.

He reflected bitterly. "I seen advertisements in the newspapers about chaps who won't be responsible for their wives' debts."

She offered no comment.

They returned to London third class and for the most part in silence.

For some days the tension in Torrington Square was grim. No money was issued for housekeeping. Edward Albert went out to get meals at convenient public houses. But Evangeline ate and there were even fresh flowers. Returning from one of those outside repasts, he discovered his home very largely occupied by his father-in-law. The Inspector was talking sternly to his daughter as Edward Albert came in, and, after making a brief gesture that commanded his son-in-law to sit down and wait his turn, he continued his discourse.

"You get more like your mother every day—in looks and behaviour. But so far as I can I will stand between you and the sort of disgrace she brought upon herself. Why should you go

on like this now? I've got to do what I can for you and see you're not put upon. But this can't go on. No. . . . And now, young man, what's all this about the household accounts and not letting your wife have a penny?"

"S'my money," said Edward Albert.

"Not if you *owe* it, young fellow my lad; not if you're under an obligation. No. There's such a thing as a regular housekeeping allowance and she's got to have it. To cover breakages and reasonable wear and tear as well as the tradesmen's bills."

"I can pay those," said Edward Albert.

"You'd better settle the amount, whoever hands it out. And if *she* handles it then there won't be any need for argument. And there's such a thing as a fair dress allowance, per month or quarter, and no decent husband refuses it. And there's her private petty cash for incidental things. You want to be a decent husband, Tewler, so far as it's in you, and all that much, no gentleman can refuse. There ought to have been a proper marriage settlement before you rushed her into all this. Better late than never. The rest of your money is your own money to do exactly what you like with. So now how do we figure it out?"

"Aren't I to have a voice——"

"No," said the Inspector, calmly but dreadfully.

Something remotely like a gleam of humour appeared in the big man's manner and even something in the nature of sympathy. "I've got no reason," he said, "to befriend you, young fellow, and you aren't the sort of person anyone would naturally take a fancy to, but I do know something of this daughter of mine—and her mother—and the sooner you fix up this particular business, exactly and for your own protection, mind you, for your own protection, the more you'll want to thank me later on. I suppose you're ordering things from the tradespeople?" he said to Evangeline.

"Naturally," said Evangeline.

"There you are!" said the Inspector.

Edward Albert could have eaten at home and saved all that much money.

So they figured it out and the Inspector wrote it all down in a clear round hand. "You'd better initial it," he said, and waited.

Edward Albert initialled it.

The Inspector rose over him and patted his shoulder with a powerful hand. "You'll both thank me for this," he said. He refused all refreshment and departed humming.

Edward Albert closed the door on him and returned to his domestic life. He sat down violently and stuck his hands in his pockets.

"That's put the lid on. I might just as well be back in the boarding-house. *My home. Gaw!*"

Evangeline was disposed to be quite kind and generous about it all.

"I didn't ask Father to come this time," she said. "He just thought about it and came. I didn't ask him to interfere."

"Gaw," said Edward Albert ambiguously.

"It's just your inexperience, Teddy. Every decent husband has to do the same sort of thing. . . . It's the way of things. My dear, you must face reality. Why can't we pull ourselves together and make the best of it? Even now."

## CHAPTER 16

### *Rifted Lute*

BUT it has to be admitted that neither she nor Teddy made whatever best of it was possible. Deep in his mind was an uncontrollable resentment against her; deep in hers, something bitterer, an uncontrollable resentment against herself. Her path in life was paved with good resolutions.

They cohabited, as the refined put it. It was like their meals together, a primary function ill done. There were phases of reconciliation; there were even days of companionship. They went to a few cinemas and music halls. They attempted friendly jokes, but his sense of humour irritated

her. There would be reasonless quarrels arising out of nothing at all, and she made them more often than he did. They had few visitors. Pip came in once or twice and Millie Chaser was a steadfast friend. One or two old school-fellows came to tea by invitation. In London there is no calling. Only the clergy call if you appear at church with some regularity or communicate. Evangeline was house-proud and proud to be among her own furniture. She would have liked more people. She had Mrs Doober and Gawpy to tea two or three times, and Mr Chaser brought round a stuffed owl he had bought in a moment of abstraction in a Strand auction room and decided was the very thing for the hall. Evangeline's place of business sent them a wedding present of an ormolu clock. But none of her former colleagues ever appeared. There was some barrier there.

The weeks lengthened into months. Evangeline took to dressing-gowns and tea-gowns, kept indoors by day and went for walks round the squares after dark. They got to an agreement that the child should be born in a nursing home. Edward Albert was torn between the cost of the nursing home and a vision of innumerable polluted napkins hung out to dry conjured up by Evangeline and Millie. Towards the end Evangeline became more erratic and fanciful and difficult to please. There was a streak of anger in her desire. And then a day came when she said, "No more of this," and kept her word. She locked her door upon him. "It's her condition," he said. "Be all right when the kid's born."

But some flash of prophetic intuition whispered the incredible suggestion that that door was locked on him for good and all.

Long before that climax he was detesting his sexual servitude almost as much as he had detested the mitigated reliefs of his pre-marital days. He would have given money, real money, to have been able to refuse her capricious summons, her formalised lapse into amorousness, but he never could. But if for example he could say : "Thanks, but I don't seem to fancy it. You see—I got something a bit better."

That would be a slap in the face for her, anyhow.

He indulged in reveries of unfaithfulness. Pick up a girl somewhere. Pick up a nice girl and lead a double life. He'd got all the time he needed to do that sort of thing now. You had to be careful, though. You had to look out for the gold-diggers. In reveries he could be unfaithful on a magnificent scale, but when it came to practical realisation, he found a thorny zareba between himself and external woman-kind. He was still haunted by the hygienic nightmares of Dr Scaber, and also you couldn't make much of a score against Evangeline out of an affair with a street-walker. He would wander about for hours, with a vague dream of accosting some frail but credulous beauty. He would follow women about the streets, and sometimes they were evidently aware of it and amused. They would glance at him just sufficiently to keep him in tow. Several times he carried adventure to the point of standing beside one of them about one o'clock and saying, "How about a spot of lunch, eh?" Twice the invitation was accepted, but in each case the lady had an urgent engagement in the afternoon, which in its way was as much a relief as a disappointment, for he didn't know in the least where to take her for her seduction. A barmaid who would smile at him drew him like a magnet. Every barmaid has a clientele of smile-purchasers and undertone gossips, whether she wants it or not. For the name of the vague, sexually maundering Tewler is Legion.

There was a coming and going of servants in the little home. At Doober's Edward Albert had regarded the incessantly changing slaves with a profound terror mixed with an increasing desire. He had been wont to dream of his first glimpse of that sort of indecorum. Now, as master of the house, he could not fail to regard the various efforts of Evangeline to secure a satisfactory domestic as putting accessible females within reach of him. He had his eye on them and they felt his eye on them.

Evangeline went to a Servants' Registry for her servants, and Servants' Registries do not make their money by bringing together domestic treasures and irreproachable employers.

One transaction of that sort and their fees are paid and there's nothing doing any more with either client. On the other hand, an unsatisfactory servant or a tiresome mistress is back in the office in a month or so, and the turnover is resumed. Evangeline's Registry had a small regiment of plausible but ultimately unsatisfying domestics and a number of amiable, prosperous-looking but temperamental mistresses, upon its books, and it couldn't have carried on without them. Trouble arose because two girls objected rather markedly to having "that Mr Tewler" hanging about the house all day. "You didn't know what he might be up to. He'd follow you into a bedroom or anything." Others didn't like being single-handed with a mistress who never came into the kitchen for a friendly word, one objected to Mrs Tewler wanting chocolate or cocoa in bed, and so forth. And one woman refused to wear a cap and apron, and one had a sniff that Evangeline simply could *not* stand. This state of domestic instability seemed likely to become chronic until a friend of Millie Chaser's produced the one possible person in a certain Mrs Butter.

There were explanations to be made about this Mrs Butter. She wasn't to be called by her Christian name ; she was to be Mrs Butter, and her title was to be housekeeper-general. These points conceded she was all complaisance.

" You see," said Millie Chaser, " she just wants to be alone. She's had a tragic time. She wants work, she says, to occupy her mind, and she does not want to have to talk to people. She has to make a living. She was an orphan or something and lived with an aunt who wanted her out of the way because she had daughters of her own. So when a fellow turned up and wanted to marry her, she married him, and he turned out the most *frightful* blackguard. *Frightful*, my dear, Took her bit of property, every penny, drank, beat her. Actually beat her. Kicked her and beat her when she was going to have a child. She was taken to hospital. The poor little baby died in a month, he had injured it in some way, and she went out of her mind about it and tried to kill herself. When she began to recover, she found this husband

of hers was in jail. He wasn't her husband ; he was a bigamist. He'd just married her to get hold of her poor little bit of money. But that disposed of him. She's a sort of stunned woman. Very nice, very gentle."

" And what's her real name ? "

" Still Butter. That was her maiden name and that's why she's Mrs and not Miss."

Mrs Butter appeared in due course. She was young, younger than Evangeline, very plainly dressed in brown, pale, brown-haired, broad-faced and quietly good-looking. She surveyed the house and discussed her duties with her mistress.

Evangeline had been warned not to be too searching in her questions and so she talked about herself. " You see—there's a baby coming."

Mrs Butter winced but remained calm. " When ? " she asked. Evangeline estimated.

" It will be well for you to have a married woman about."

" It's what I've wanted. It's what I want dreadfully. How good of you, Mrs Butter, to see that. Just now I'm *splendid*, but sometimes—oh, I'm afraid."

" Why we go through with it ! " said Mrs Butter, and left her sentence incomplete.

" That's what I ask myself."

" If there was any pleasure to be found in it," said Mrs Butter. . . .

" On Sundays if you want to go to church——"

" I don't go to church," said Mrs Butter, and added, " It's a mockery."

" We don't go so very much," said Evangeline.

" You'd like me to move in—when ? I'm quite free."

Edward Albert discovered Mrs Butter after some days. She looked young and amenable and she regarded him with calm respect. But he had learnt that she was a woman and had begun. He watched her discreetly. He spent a week and a half trying to catch her eye. The atmosphere of the flat improved ; things were put in their places ; the rooms seemed brighter. Then Mrs Butter, surveying her handi-

work in the drawing-room, remarked to Evangeline, "It would look better with a cat."

They discussed pet animals. "They make things homey," Mrs Butter thought. Dogs she did not like, they fawned upon you and tried to lick your face, but cats, nice cats, had dignity. They knew their place. "But they have a lot of kittens," said Evangeline. "Not the cat I know," said Mrs Butter. And presently a mitigated young Tom, glossy black with yellow eyes, reposed upon the Tewler hearthrug and blinked at Mrs Butter putting the buttered tea-cake on the brass trivet, which was another of her helpful suggestions.

One afternoon a little later she was kneeling in the same place, tickling the cat's throat and fighting his claws. Her crouching figure looked very pleasantly feminine. Evangeline was in her own room lying down. Suddenly Mrs Butter found Edward Albert pressing himself against her. "Pussy, pussy," he said.

She could feel his body trembling. He slid a caressing hand down her shoulder and the line of her hips. He gave her a pat and the beginning of a pinch.

She shook herself away from him and rose to her feet. She faced him, regarding him steadily. She did not appear to be in the least excited or angry.

She spoke calmly and almost as if she had had her little speech prepared for some days.

"I don't want to seem wanting in respect, Mr Tewler, but if you do anything of that sort again I'll smack you face *hard* and march right out of this house. I've had enough jiggery-pokery from one man to last me a lifetime. I don't want to be a bit disagreeable. I know what men are, they don't seem able to help it, but the less I have to do with them the better. You keep your place and I'll keep mine and we'll get along nicely. I don't want to make no upset here. I like the missus somehow and I'm sorry for her. Else I wouldn't stay. She's awake. That's her little table bell."

She stepped round him as one steps round something unpleasant on the carpet.

"Coming," she cried to Evangeline.

Edward Albert attempted an ironical whistle, but Mrs Butter held her position, intacta. There was no mistaking her sincerity. He decided henceforth to treat her with cold disdain—and be damned to her!

He wished he knew some chaps, some really fast chaps, who would give him just the hints he needed for a real man's life in London. He had heard of clubs but he did not know anyone who could introduce him to one. There you get together with fellows in the know. . . .

That dream common to your *Homo Tewler Anglicanus* and *Americanus*, of getting together with fellows in the know, of conniving together in clubs, was soon to spin fraternally in rotaries about the world. A great brotherly idea.

## CHAPTER 17

### *Henry Tewler Begins*

EVANGELINE had a bad time in the nursing home. Bitter pangs rushed upon her, filled with violent futile effort, and receded. "Try now." "Bear down," and so on. But at last with a feeble cackle, a new Tewler was born into the world, and presented in due course wiped and washed to his exhausted mother.

Evangeline regarded her offspring with a hostile eye, over the corner of the sheet. She made no movement to touch it. "I knew it would look like *him*," she said. "I knew."

The eye closed.

The nurse looked at her colleague. Both were slightly shocked.

"He'll look prettier to-morrow," said the nurse.

Evangeline turned her head over to clear her mouth and spoke deliberately with her eyes shut. "I don't care. . . . I don't care how it looks," she said. "Take the thing away. I'm glad—glad to be rid of it."

Such was the welcome of Henry Tewler to the mystery of conscious existence.

## CHAPTER 18

*Tewler Defied*

EVANGELINE came back from the maternity hospital in the charge of a protective, hygienic nurse with a hard, bright, pink-cheeked face and a naturally hostile and altogether too understanding eye, who seemed to enjoy saying : " You have to keep out of here, Mr Tewler. You can't come near her for a bit. You can say ' Good deavning ' from the door if you like. But we must take care of her still. She's not out of her trouble yet."

A month of enforced chastity passed and was followed by a second month. Master Henry Tewler ceased to look like a flayed monkey in the course of twenty-four hours and began to be attractive. He ceased to squint and produced real brown hair of very great fineness. He lost any personal resemblances and passed into that phase when babies can be freely exchanged and no one the wiser. He fattened under a carefully regimented bottle-feeding, for Evangeline was neither willing nor able to undertake that task. He gurgled and waved his arms about and won a smile from his mother and so became the household darling.

" He's getting artful," said the proud father. " Think he's like me, nurse ? "

" There's something about the eyes," the nurse admitted.

The nurse went at the end of the second month, and Mrs Butter, who more than anyone else was enslaved by Master Henry, insisted on becoming his nurse and protector. " It might be my own little lost mite come back to me," she said. A new and slatternly " general " came in by the day to take over the domestic work.

Evangeline was up and about again now and cooking very competently. She was taking in the French costumes she had let out, and bringing them up to date with the help of *Mode*. She went for a walk round the squares, she went for a drive round Hyde Park in a cab, she went with Edward

Albert to a cinema. And still there came no evening summons to Edward Albert. What did it mean?

He brought matters to a crisis. "You're looking fine," he said.

"I'm getting better."

"You're looking just right. I'd like to kiss you. . . ."

She raised her eyebrows.

He came to the point.

"Ain't it about time, Evadne; well—we *did* something?"

She had been rehearsing her part in this encounter for some time. But this opening line didn't fit.

"We aren't going to *do* something any more," she said.

"But you're my wife. You got to do your juty by me."

She shook her head.

"But you *got* to."

"All that's been changed," she said. "My body belongs to me and I do what I like with it. And as far as all that goes, I've done with you for ever, little man. For ever and ever and ever."

"You can't do *that*."

"*Nous verrons.*"

"But— You're mad. You're flying in the face of the laws of Gord and man. You can't mean it. No. And what are *you* going to do? Go without— You can't stand that any more than I can. Less. Don't talk rubbish. Why, you're *obliged* to."

"Nothing like trying," she said.

"But you're obliged every way. It's against the law. I could sue you. There's such a thing as Restitution of Con-nubial Rights. I've seen it in *Lloyd's News*. Only the other day. . . ."

"And what can *that* do for you, Mr Tewler? Aren't you having your connubial rights now? Don't I keep house for you, cook for you, cohabit as they say? But my body is my own, I tell you. My body is my own. Do you think the law can send a couple of policemen in here, to assist you in your—operations—overwhelm me and see that everything goes off satisfactorily? Do you imagine that?"

The word "policeman" had given him an idea. "I'll—I'll write to your father. *He* won't stand for this?"

"It'll be a lovely letter, *Teddy*," she mocked. "Will you show it to me?"

"You don't mean all this," he said. "This is one of your silly moods. I've 'ad to wait. I suppose I'll 'ave to wait a bit more. But I've got to know you pretty well by now, my lady. *You'll* come round. Don't keep me too long. I warn you I *may* be unfaithful to you."

Her face betrayed the obvious repartee she checked unspoken. "Two—," she began, and stopped short.

He stood staring at her, struck by a new and still more detestable thought.

"Your body's your own, you say," he repeated slowly. "You think you can do what you like with it. What dja mean by that? You tell me exactly what foolishness you got in your mind. You've got something behind this. Somebody. . . ."

His face became as ugly as his thought.

She shrugged her shoulders and said not a word.

"I shall know. I shall find out. I'll have you watched. . . . If you think you can get away with *that*. . . ."

She smiled radiantly, just to infuriate him. But she was aquiver with resolution.

"It's these damned suffragettes. Them and their blasted Vote. Lot of screaming hags. New Woman and all that. Putting these ideers about against all Religion and Decency. . . . Damn ideers! Damn *all* ideers! Well, now I know where we are."

"Now I know where I am. *Eclairs*—what is it?—*cissement*. My fault more than yours, but we've got to go through with it now."

"I'll see you go through with it," said Edward Albert as grimly as he could. "I'll *get* you. Mark my words. I'll kick you out of here, my lady, into the gutter."

"Kick, Mr Jusqu'au bootist. Kick."

They became aware of Mrs Butter standing in the room and waiting to speak. They were suddenly both ashamed

of themselves. "I'm going to bath Baby, Mam," she said. "He's perfectly lovely to-night. He's making a new noise with his little hand to his mouth. Just lovely."

He followed Mrs Butter. Evangeline was disposed to follow and then decided to stare out of the window instead.

Now this was a very cardinal moment in the development of *Homo Tewler Anglicanus*. In this one specimen the type has unfolded, slowly but surely, and here we have it now with all its distinctive qualities displayed. In spite of serious initial disadvantages, Edward Albert had made good. We have traced his education in that peculiar blend of sexual modesty and enterprise that has made the Englishman the world's lover ; we have watched the natural awakening of his imperialism, have seen him become a cricket fan and a broad and intermittent but sincere Churchman ; we have pursued his growing craving to become clubable and to get together with fellows in the know ; and now here we have dawning that realisation of the extreme evil of "ideers" which more than anything else has made our England what it is to-day.

He became aware of "ideers" all about him, "ideers" of every sort, like a storm of hornets ; ologies and isms beyond counting. You daren't open a book or magazine now on account of them. Not that he did open books if he could help it, but Evangeline had taken to reading the queerest stuff, and he sometimes saw the titles or the List of Contents. New Women indeed ! All his life henceforth, he realised, must be a fight against this malignant devastation of his complacency. They came in a multitude of forms and under a great variety of names, Feminism, Socialism (confiscate your mortgages and have wives in common and then where would you be ?), Marxism, Communism (the same only worse), Collectivism, Pacificism, Internationalism, Scepticism, Atheism, Darwinism, Nationalisation, Vegetarianism, Trade Unionism, Biology, Sociology, Ethnology, Archaeology, Einstein, Bernard Shaw, Birth Control, Modernism, *all* that stuff ; stuff you never heard of before, got up mostly by International Jews and long-haired highbrows of the utmost

perversity, suggesting this, suggesting that, destroying your beliefs, making the working classes discontented, threatening your financial security, seducing women from the path of virtue and submission. Once he was aware of it, this buzzing of minds never seemed to cease. A hornet's nest of Free Thinking and liberal thought called aloud for extirpation.

“Christian dost thou hear them  
On the Holy Ground,  
How the hosts of Midian  
Buzz and buzz around?  
Christian up and smite them——”

He snorted at them ; he flapped his hate at them. The best way of dealing with any of them was to shout the word “Bawls” at them in a loud, crushing, masterful voice. If you got together with other fellows of the same mind and shouted “Bawls” in unison, it could be extremely reassuring. It seemed to drown the buzzing altogether. The battle of the Bawling and the Buzzing was surely over. . . .

Then it began again.

## CHAPTER 19

### *Exit Evangeline*

MATTERS hung in suspense for nearly a fortnight more after this very definitive quarrel. Plainly Mr and Mrs Tewler had come to a breaking-point, but except for a very definite wish to hurt each other, neither of them had very lucid ideas for the next phase in this antagonism. Edward Albert had that habit of indecision which the normal English training develops, and still he clung to some idea of a relapse on her part. She, for her part, had already made an indirect inquiry about her old business position and knew that she would be taken back there if she wanted it. She had been missed all the time. But that would reopen a relationship she had thought closed for ever. It wounded her pride to be dependent on her husband any longer. She could go back

to the old life and hold out. Edward Albert was not the only male upon the earth. Indeed no.

At the back of her mind she realised that it was she who had brought this unhappiness upon him, quite as much as upon herself. She hated him not only for his own sake but because it was her supreme blunder. It was hard to sustain her personal pride in the night against the gnawing realisation that she had snatched, that she had been a scheming fool. It was difficult to shift all that to his account. She would feel better about him if she could get square with him and then forget about him—forget about him altogether. But how was that to be done now? She had resisted any natural weakening towards the child, but it made a poor story for her if she did not do her duty by it. She had to feel there would be someone to care for it, and so she turned her thoughts and hopes towards Mrs Butter.

Matters were brought to a sudden crisis by an outbreak on the part of Edward Albert. In the dead of night the whole household was awakened by his beating and kicking at his wife's locked door. "Let me in, you bitch," he was shouting. "It's my right."

Mrs Butter appeared in a red flannel dressing-gown. "Go back to your bed, Mr Tewler. You're waking the child."

"Get out," said Mr. Tewler; "I want my rights."

"That's as may be," said Mrs Butter. "But this isn't the time to demand them. One o'clock in the morning! And you're waking the child."

She overwhelmed him by her invincible sanity.

"Well, hasn't a man *rights*?" he demanded.

"At a proper time," said Mrs Butter, and stood expectant.

"Oh, what the Hell is a man to do?" he cried. "What the Hell is a man to do?"

He was sobbing.

"You go back to bed," said Mrs Butter, almost kindly.

In the morning nothing was said at breakfast and Mr Tewler went out slamming the door behind him. Evangeline was busy for a time in her own room and then came into the

"I don't know what you mean."

"Well, passion."

"There may be feelings I don't know."

"There are," said Evangeline. "There are."

"Like men have?"

"Listen, Mrs Butter. There's another man. . . . I want him in my arms and in my body. That shocks you? I meant it to. But living with your master shocks me. It's prostitution. I've done with all this. I'm resolved to go. I shall go, anyhow. One thing has kept me. *That*. But now, if you will promise me to stay on with that poor little wretch. . . . I don't know what *he* will do, but if he turns you out, I'll find some place for you. You understand what I mean? I'll give it to you. . . ."

"You're doing wrong," said Mrs Butter, but there was no severity now in her condemnation.

"There is only one rule for those who are in love, Mrs Butter. 'Do it now.' I'm going to. My lord and master has gone off in the sulks. I doubt if we shall see him back before one. I'm packing now. I've started. Are you going to help me?"

"And when he comes back, what am I to tell him?"

"Jurst anything you like, my dear. Anything you like. Will you help me? There's those two new valises upstairs I had for Torquay. And there's the older bag with the French labels."

Mrs Butter made no further protest. She was indeed suddenly helpful. She thought of a hindering complication.  
"There's Janet."

"Tell her I've been called away suddenly."

Mrs Butter brought the bags to the bedroom. Evangeline had already been folding her clothes. The packing went swiftly. When Henry Tewler demanded Mrs Butter's presence, Janet in a state of helpful admiration came to assist her mistress. "*Why!* you're going for quite a long visit," she said. "You're taking almost everything."

"I may be away for months," said Evangeline. "You never know."

"You don't, do you," said Janet, and made no further comment.

"There's the laundry," she said presently.

"That can be sent after me. I'll arrange all that."

"Then you're not going abroad or anything?"

"I'm not going abroad. So far as I know."

"You don't know exactly?"

"I don't know exactly. Yet. It's a very sudden call."

The packing went on busily in a state of suppressed comment. Evangeline forgot nothing.

She gave Mrs Philip Chaser's address to Mrs Butter and went to say good-bye to her son. He was very contentedly asleep. She knelt by the cot and betrayed very little emotion. "Adieu," she said. "Child of *La Mère Inconnue*." She reflected profoundly. "Some day we may meet again. Who knows? Like ships that pass in the night."

Janet went out to call a taxi.

Evangeline faced Mrs Butter for the last time. "After all," she said, "what I am doing is quite the best that can happen to him."

"Maybe that is true."

"You will stick to your word?"

"I understand all I've undertook."

Janet stood waiting with the hat box in her hand. All the rest of the luggage had gone down to the taxi.

There was a moment of hesitation. Evangeline would have liked to exchange kisses with Mrs Butter, but there was something in Mrs Butter's bearing that dissuaded her.

"Anything, any message, I mean, or if you want anything, will reach me through that address. I shan't be there, but they will send it on."

"I quite understand," said Mrs Butter.

There was nothing more to be said.

When Edward Albert came home at one o'clock he found Janet in a state of pleasant excitement awaiting him in the hall. "She's *gone*, Sir," she said. "Packed up everything she's got and gone. Gone off, Sir."

"Who's gone?" asked Edward Albert, though he knew the answer.

"Mes Tewler, Sir. She packed up everything she had and she's gone off in a taxi-cab."

"Where?" he asked, still outwardly calm.

"I tried to listen to the address she gave, but she saw that, and she told the cabman just to drive into Gower Street first. . . ." The girl's face was bright with detective enthusiasm. The common human impulse to condemn and mob and pelt and pursue was all awake in her.

"Did you take the number of the taxi?"

"I didn't think of that until it was too late, Sir."

Mr Tewler sought Mrs Butter. "Why did you let that woman go?" he demanded.

"You mean your wife, Sir. I'm not her keeper, Sir."

"Well, she's gone. She shall never darken these doors again. Did she say where she'd gone?"

"She left this address. But she said she won't be there. It's just for sending on. . . ."

Mr Tewler went to his wife's room and regarded the ransacked wardrobe, the empty toilet table and the chest of drawers with all the drawers pulled out, in profound silence. Tissue paper was scattered on the floor. He thought she might have left a letter for him, but there was no letter. There ought to have been a letter. Still silent, he went to look at his son. Then he remarked: "Better've somethin' to eat, I suppose." He was treating the inevitable as though it were the unexpected. After lunch he sat in a sort of coma in the drawing-room for a long time. Tea brightened him. "Got to do something about it," he said. "What've I got to do about it? It'll be a divorce right enough. . . . On the streets."

He had contemplated rows, accusations, recriminations, repentsances, adulteries discovered, flights, pursuits, divorces, but he had not contemplated Evangeline vanishing quietly into nothingness. He did not want to betray his extreme bewilderment.

He decided to go round to the Chasers and cast his perplexities on Pip.

## CHAPTER 20

*Divorce*

MR PHILIP CHASER elicited Edward Albert's ideas about the business in hand. He drew them out one by one, offering very little comment. He had just become a member of the Junior Conservative Club in Whitehall Place, and thither with a certain worldly pride he had conducted Edward Albert. It seemed to both of them a far more suitable place for discussing the grave problem before them than Millie Chaser's home. They sat in a quiet corner of the huge smoking-room and Mr Philip asked his questions like a solicitor preparing a case.

Finally he summed up. He neighed with unusual force and duration so that distant plotters in the smoking-room suspended their machinations and looked round apprehensively. "All this," he said, "is going to cost you a lot of money. You think you are going to get damages, heavy damages, you say, but who is going to pay you damages and —*hey*—what are they going to pay damages for? All she's done is to pack up and go. That's no grounds for a divorce. You might get a legal separation, and so far as I know, that's no comfort to anybody. I've never—*hey*—in the course of my life met a separated man or a separated woman. I absolutely don't know, ab-so-lutely, where they go and what they do with themselves and each other. Yes, you think you can put detectives on to her to watch her and catch her out. As you don't know where she's gone. . . . Oh, I'm not going to tell you. I—*hey*—promised not to. You'll have to find out where she is and where she goes, and you'll have to have her caught—*hey*—what's the word? *Flagrante delicto*. Tedium and annoying. And meanwhile the law insists that you must lead a blameless life, absolutely blameless. You're not rich enough to go abroad and live in a state of—*hey*—inaccessible sin, and there's an excellent functionary called the King's Proctor who has a small fund available for—*hey*—watching

you to see you *are* blameless. For the better part of a year, Mr Teddy. In the interests of Justice, Religion and social order, I understand. *She* can kick up her heels as much as she likes, but you will just have to listen to your Private Enquiry Agent's reports. You'll find them—*hey*—infuriating—absolutely infuriating. . . . You aren't going to stand that! No? And what are you going to do about it?"

He laid a restraining hand upon Edward Albert's arm. "Listen," he said. "The only person who can make all this business reasonably cheap and easy is your wife. Suppose she *has* another man, if you go on dreaming of getting those damages out of him she'll fight like the devil to see he doesn't pay them. That's only natural. Particularly as I suspect he's a married man. But if she goes to some little country pub somewhere and sends you a confession and the bill, and tells you she hasn't the remotest intention of giving you the man's real name, there's your evidence. Your Private Enquiry Agent will see to the evidence. And there you are."

"But there's eight or ten months I got to wait?"

"Ask the law. Ask the church. Ask the Divorce Law Association. Write to your Member of Parliament about it. The—*hey*—Ap-*ostle* Paul said somewhere that it's better to marry than to burn, but this way you can marry and burn at the same time. Not my fault, Teddy. I'm not responsible for *these*—*hey*—arrangements."

"You'd have arranged it better."

"*Hey*—I can't arrange *everything*. It's a pity."

"Gaw," said Edward Albert. "I been a fool. I frown away my life."

"I wouldn't even say that. Suppose—*hey*—suppose it's the world we live in, is the fool and not us, eh? Suppose it throws away our lives *for us*—however we dodge or however we behave?"

"I don't understand that."

"Come to think of it—*hey*—I don't understand it myself. Think it all over, Teddy. Millie and I will have a little heart-to-heart talk with the other side. Eh?"

Edward Albert nodded gloomily. "And I got to hold out for—from first to last for a year. While *she*— I can't do it, Pip."

"Well, don't get caught. Let not your left hand know what your right hand doeth."

"I shall go mad one day and shoot her."

"You won't even get to buying a pistol."

"I'll kill myself."

"You'll live—*hey*—donkeys years."

"Well, what do you advise?"

"The-e-e—" He prolonged the word into a neigh—"prostitute is the safety-valve of the respectable Christian life. That is all I can tell you. Be anonymous, be dark and discreet. The King's Proctor will probably send his man to ask your wife to tell her anything she knows about you. If you keep on good terms with her—"

"Damn her!"

"Exactly. If you keep on good terms with her, damn her, she will send him empty away. And there you are!"

"And she has the laugh of me!"

"She's much more likely to get sentimental about it, after it's all over and she's got what she wants, whatever it is she wants. Don't—*hey*—rankle, Teddy. These uncontested divorces, they're like something done in an office. They're about as interesting as the births, marriages and deaths in a country newspaper. There's nothing spicy to get into the papers. It's when the evidence of misconduct warms up, what the maid saw through the keyhole and all that, or there's a fighting cross-examination, that there's a fuss. I—*hey*—don't think either of you will have to go into court. I don't think it's necessary, but I may be wrong there. The case won't last ten minutes. . . ."

That omniscient young undertaker was right. The King's Proctor gave no sign. The decree *nisi* was made absolute in due course. But by that time Edward Albert was already embarked upon a new and happier way of life.

## CHAPTER 21

*Mrs Butter takes Pity*

ONE night Mrs Butter woke up to find the master in her room and his arms about her. "I can't sleep," he said. "I can't sleep. I can't go on."

She sat up sleepily. Her eyes were sticky with drowsiness and she opened them with an effort. Then she started and stared at his dim figure clinging to her, but she said not a word. There was a light in the passage but none in the room. Through her thin nightgown, he could feel her warm soft body and the delicate curves of her bosom. She exhaled a sweet warmth. She put her hand on his shoulder.

"I lie there and I keep thinking of you. I'll kill myself." He was blubbering.

"I can't endure life. I love you."

She put her face close to his ear. "What do you want?" she breathed.

"I can't stand it. You got to let me. You let me and I'll marry you. I swear I'll marry you the very moment I get free. Oh Mrs Butter. *Mary!*!"

"But suppose we were to have a child."

"Oh gaw!" he exclaimed. "Haven't I learnt my lesson?"

"You're sure this time?"

"*Mary!*"

"No. Don't call me Mary get. I want to be sure. What do you do?"

He spluttered and explained. She said hardly a word but she was attentive and there was no sort of response in her body to his embraces. This did not deter him in the least. She threw back the bedclothes.

"I suppose it had to come to this," she said, and still held him back from her.

"Promise me one thing," she said.

"Anything. Oh my dear! Oh my dear!"

"Yes, but this. You will let that boy be *mine*—really mine. You won't turn against him because of *her*. You might, you know. You'll never raise your hand against him. You'll be good to him—always? Promise."

"And don't you care a little bit for *me*? "

"You can't help yourself, Mr Tewler. I'm sorry for you. You're such a *young* fellow. I feel like a mother to both of you."

"And you call me Mr Tewler! "

"Yes. And you'll call me Mrs Butter until the day we're married. If we start using Christian names, servants will notice, people will talk; that girl Janet. . . ."

So it was that Mrs Butter entrusted her body to Edward Albert. . . .

"Oh good!" said the happy convertite. "Now I feel square with life again. Did *you* like that?"

"I don't *like* anything of the sort. But I suppose a man has to do that sort of thing. It's nature's way. And now you go off to your bed, Mr Tewler, and have a good sleep, and don't you say a word about this to me to-morrow; not a word. I see no sense in talking over such things. I hoped I'd done with it for good. And remember when Janet's here, walls have ears. I've got to be careful. I'd get rid of her if I dared, but that might set her suspecting. Good night, Mr Tewler."

"Just a kiss," said her grateful lover.

She turned her cheek to him.

And when Edward Albert was safely in his room, Mrs Butter went to Master Henry Tewler and took him in her arms and hugged him and kissed him and sat still, and presently wept.

"What else was there to do, you poor little mite?" she whispered. "It *had* to be."

"Yes, but this. You will let that boy be *mine*—really mine. You won't turn against him because of *her*. You might, you know. You'll never raise your hand against him. You'll be good to him—always? Promise."

"And don't you care a little bit for *me*?"

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"And you call me Mr Tewler!"

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## CHAPTER 22

*Morningside Prospect*

EDWARD ALBERT married Mrs Butter a month after the decree was made absolute. They were married in a Registry Office and Pip and Millie were witnesses. She would not be married in church. "That wouldn't be right," she said. "Not for us two. I've been married in church before, thank you."

And with this the frank record of our sample's sex life comes to an end. Edward Albert Tewler had grown up by this time and arrived at man's estate, and henceforth there was no more essential change for him in these matters. Many little things happened, they continue to happen to this day, in his sexual reactions, but they marked nothing novel in the rhythms of his being. His fundamental curiosities were allayed, and if he peeped now he peeped for satisfaction and not for knowledge. He had his flirtatious and knowing moments, he would smirk at anything attractively feminine, but henceforth his passions were on the whole satisfactorily assuaged. He allowed himself to forget many phases in his development that we have been able to recall. He hated the memory of Evangeline, but with a diminishing bitterness. She was a bad woman and he had got rid of her. His bitterer humiliations passed out of his memory except now and then in a dream. He reshaped his private autobiography until it seemed almost that Evangeline had divorced him. He had seen through her and got rid of her because he had fallen in love with a better woman.

By imperceptible degrees the simpler, stronger mind of the new Mrs Tewler came to dominate the general form of his life. It was she who broached the idea of going right out of London to live in the country. It was all very well, she said, to live in London if you were in society or business or anything like that, but why should they? They could live in some pleasant place, near the sea for instance, near some town but

not in it, at half the cost. If they got a place near a golf links he could learn to play golf. There wasn't much sense in hitting about an expensive little ball from place to place until you lost it, and then beginning all over again day after day, but men seemed to find something in it and some women even went so far in humouring them as to play the game with them, but she couldn't imagine herself going as far as that. But it helped a man to get to know people and it took him out of himself, and Mrs Tewler No. 2 was very clear on the necessity of taking Edward Albert out of himself.

He might get a nice little car and learn to drive it. Why not? Then he ought to look into his affairs more than he had been doing. He would be able to restore his overstrained resources by saving and finding suitable mortgages. He might get to friendly terms with his bank manager and find local opportunities. If they were to get near a big seaside town they would be able to run in and see cinemas and things, and there would be schools presently for Henry. And doctors.

All these possibilities floated into his mind from the second Mrs Tewler's occasional remarks, and most of them he made his own, and expanded and reproduced for her always respectful approval. They sought a home according to her specifications and they found one near the golf links at Casing, twelve miles and a half from the borough boundary of Brighthampton on Sea. It stood in a row of kindred little villas, Morningside Prospect, fundamentally alike but varied by differences in their bow windows, gothic stone work, green slates or tiles, red brick or white roughcast, so that each had a certain individuality of its own.

Individuality, mitigated uniformity, was the ruling idea of the Casing Prospect Estate Company. Its leading director, seeking something a little different from the Avenues, Terraces, Roads, Gardens and Places that dominate building estate nomenclature, came one day on some mention of the Nevsky Prospekt and seized upon it with the decision of genius. Morningside Prospect faced the sunrise and its back gardens glowed in the afternoon. Sundown Prospect was back to back with it, separated from it by a great profusion of tamarisk

and some wind-twisted pines. There was a Channel Prospect with a better view of the sea but rather windy and an Empire Prospect with no particular outlook ; there was Brighthampton Prospect and St Andrews Prospect looking out on the links. All the houses were as alike as pigs in a litter, but by the most sedulous exertions any exact repetition had been avoided.

In only one instance had that director's imagination gone a little too far ; he had found a stock of pseudo-Javanese figures, plinths and gateways, intended for a still-born Oriental Café in Brighthampton which had failed to produce its capital ; the stuff was offered at a knock-out price and he bought it up. Opportunity rather over-stimulated his imagination. He created Celestial Prospect, a name which many serious people thought either ominous or blasphemous, and with the idea of giving it a still more oriental flavour he turned all the little houses aslant, so that they were in echelon instead of line abreast. Celestial Prospect never let so well as its brothers. From the first it seemed to attract the wrong sort of people, people who brought banjos with them, women who wore trousers, people who lit up Chinese lanterns at night and had moonlight singsongs, flitters, tenants who kept the company's agents alert at the end of every quarter. One man painted his Javanese plinths in a most objectionable manner. Happily Celestial was a good half mile away from Morningside, and for the Tewlers, there was no need to go that way ; it was a mere intermittent nocturnal melodious disrespect not nearly so troublesome as the corncrakes beyond the links.

There was much in common among the tenants of Morningside Prospect. They were all living very easily. There were two types of them. There were two young couples who had come for the sun and air, one because the husband was tuberculous and one because the wife was so afflicted. They had "means" ; they never revealed what they were, and one of the husbands designed tessellated pavements in a geometrical manner that the world had so far failed to appreciate. The idea of a deep-seated and indefinite illness appealed to Edward Albert and as soon as he heard of his possible

neighbours he told the agent that his health, too, wasn't by any means as good as he liked. He had to take things easy for a time anyhow. "It's something the doctor can't quite make out," he said. "But London's no place for me. 'I get it there.'" And he indicated the upper buttons of his waistcoat. "You can't be too careful."

Apart from these sun and air cases the tenants were quiet men of a certain maturity. They were "comfortably off". Younger wives or unmarried sisters did for them, and there was a niece or so and a few children. Both types were agreed in eschewing strenuousness from all their living and doing, and everybody in the Prospect, except one man with a cork leg and the tessellationist, played golf.

The Prospect Club had only an eight hole course, but there were the Casing links half way to Brighthampton and further along, close to the sea, the Brighthampton Borough links. So that the countryside was always dotted with little intent groups of baggy knickerbockered men and sympathetically attired women marching gravely with their instruments and attendants in the track of an elusive ball, occasionally overtaking it and pausing to do further execution upon it and then on again. Day after day and all round the earth the stern unsmiling golfers marched and smote and marched again, without haste or laughter. The game had been endemic in the east of Scotland for some centuries and had been supposed peculiar to Scotchmen. Then suddenly it had swept like a pestilence about the earth. No race was found to be immune. It is calculated that the number of miles walked every day in the days of the Golf Age. . . . But statistics will impair the severity of our narrative!

The elder tenants of Morningside Prospect, were, I have said, all very similar to one another. Yet they were not a band of brothers ; they came from many different parts of the world. Men have speculated about the instinctive elements in the make-up of certain insects that enable them to find their way across immense distances to the rare and peculiar plant or animal upon which they may mate or feed or lay their eggs. It is a miracle of selection reminding us of that

vision of Swedenborg's where all the damned and blessed flew of their own accord to the particular places appointed for them, hellions of every sort to their hells and the blessed to their heavens. And the particular thing that had assembled all these worthy men in Morningside Prospect was the searing influence of Monday morning upon their souls.

From the ages of thirteen or fourteen onward they had all been working, year in and year out, at occupations that required their punctual appearance at a place of business at a specific hour on Monday morning and had fixed them rigidly to mealtimes and routines of punctuality always. They had taken perhaps a fortnight or less of holiday in the year, glorious days that made fifty Mondays in the year darker by contrast.

All through their lives they had toiled and dealt faithfully with their employers and behaved circumspectly, and saved money with one sole object in view, *retirement*. No living dangerously for them, no invention nor discovery, but retirement. For them, not having to go to work on Monday, not hurrying to the shop or office in the morning, had become the Supreme Good. Religious people talk of the Desecration of the Sabbath, but for these worthy souls, who had been the backbone of that ordered business world that is now crumbling down to irreparable ruin, the Desecration of the Week Day was the crowning triumph of life. They trampled upon their defeated fetters, at eleven o'clock in the morning, at three o'clock in the afternoon, with a feeling of peculiar blessedness.

So, all over the world of the great decay, the exploiters of land, the building estates, built their Morningside Prospects, as moth hunters treacle for moths, and there these men who had retired, according to their means and dimensions, came and lived, and Mr and Mrs Tewler abode beside them.

They lived in Homestead, in Morningside Prospect, for the rest of their lives until an accident overtook and destroyed it in 1941, and they lived in considerable contentment. A certain slovenliness of accent that had characterised Edward Albert's English became rather more apparent, and he forgot all his Elementary French except *Parlez-vous Français*

used in a facetious manner. He had a nice little garden, too small and sandy for any real gardening but pleasant to potter about in. He would sometimes clip his hedge in front and mow an infinitesimal lawn with a miniature mowing machine. He read less and less. He found even detective stories difficult to follow. He tried to find what is called a "hobby", but this was difficult. He affected amateur carpentry and bought a ready-made workshop, Villa Size No. 3; he christened this the Glory Hole, and thither he would retire for mysterious activities. He found fretwork attractive and he made a triple hanging bookshelf whose only faults were that it seemed to have no centre of gravity and there were no books in the house to put on it. It hung in his bedroom. He liked to look at it. He was, he admitted, never very good with his hands.

Both he and Mrs Tewler were fond of cats. The black cat from Torrington Square lived for eleven years and was supplemented and then succeeded by a number of other mitigated Toms. Edward Albert devoted himself to golf. His astigmatism was diagnosed for the first time by a fellow player who offered useful advice to him, and he went to an oculist and got a pair of spectacles that greatly improved his game. His drives never went far enough because he had a subconscious dread of going too far, but his putting was slow, careful and fairly good. Like most of his neighbours he was a sincere but not extravagant Christian, that is to say he believed no end and never went to church if he could help it. Mrs Tewler never went to church or expressed any pious or impious sentiment. Faith for her had proved a disappointment too deep for words. The church of Casing, the only one within a Sabbath day's journey, was reputed to be "high", not quite the flavour for Morningside Prospect, and there was a little parson who aroused suspicion by trotting about the churchyard and vicarage shyly but importantly in a biretta and soutane when any reasonable creature would be wearing thin flannel. At times Edward Albert was still aware that away beyond the limits of Morningside Prospect, ideers were buzzing and booming, but a mere whisper of "Bawls"

dispelled any anxiety. Naturally he increased in girth and substance through the circling years.

Season succeeded season. Year after year the great hunter Orion, with the Dog Star at his heels, marched in glory across the heavens and the signs of the Zodiac succeeded one another in due order in their presumably benevolent watch over mankind. Life in Morningside Prospect went on like a sleeping top within these vast rotations, or like a tremendous clock with Morningside Prospect at its centre, and if you had suggested to any of its tenants, young or old, that this reef of happy retirement was at the heart not so much of a time keeper as of a time bomb, you would have been regarded as the wildest, most unnecessary of Buzzers and you would have been told to stop talking Bawls until you desisted.

BOOK THE FOURTH  
THE POLITICAL LIFE OF  
EDWARD ALBERT TEWLER

CHAPTER THE FIRST AND LAST

*Political Animals?*

THE preceding Book in the life of Edward Albert Tewler has been a long one. Now by way of relief the reader shall have a very short one. And the air of it will be free from that flavour of indelicacy which is unhappily so inseparable from a truthful rendering of sexual life.

It is necessary, if this monograph is to be complete, that a statement of Aristotle's should be considered, and this again involves a certain qualified tribute to the contribution of that outstanding figure to the entanglement of human thought. He looms large in the history of the mind, so that millions who have never heard more of him than his name, treat it with an almost superstitious respect. He devised a logical process that ignored the universal uniqueness of events, fixed species, which nevertheless fluctuate eternally, and substituted dogmatic generalisation for protean truth. Later, he drifted away from this towards the systematic collection and record of fact, but the syllogism of the young Aristotle remained to hamper the human mind, and bookish scholars in monastic cells, unable and unwilling to go out and observe and experiment further, made the hasty accumulations of the old Aristotle their test of reality instead of carrying on with his marshalling of knowledge.

As Christian teaching developed its Creeds after the conversion of Constantine, it appropriated the intellectual prestige of Aristotle, and, until Roger Bacon made his shrill and passionate protests, the church kept the mind of man

aloof from the ever-changing realities about him. So through the Early Dark Ages, the genus *Homo* blundered along dismally and dirtily, learning next to nothing by experience and suffering. All of which will be expanded further in the Sixth Book of this complete and veracious study of a sample contemporary man. For in his generation, Edward Albert was the heir to it all. It had gone to his making and limitation even though he knew nothing about it. And so it is with all of us. None of us would have been what we are if Aristotle had never lived, to mark and fix a cardinal error in the bewilderment of human thought.

This passing tribute to the outstanding classic is paid prematurely here, because it is the necessary setting for one of his uncorrected inaccuracies, in all its unmitigated and unjustifiable assurance. "Man," said he, without qualification, "is a political animal."

Now this is neither wholly false nor wholly true. It is false in so far as Homo Tewler does not behave as a political animal should do, participating with the utmost fullness in the collective life of his *polis*, but it is true in the sense that his life is inseparable from that collective life and that he cannot escape from it, whatever he does to detach himself. Even your misanthropical recluse still contributes an implicit or outspoken criticism to the general life. So that if we qualify Aristotle and say that man is an inadequately Political Animal, we can accept his statement.

The *polis* of Aristotle was a city state, but now the human community has expanded, function by function, irregularly and confusedly, to a Cosmopolis—the whole human species. A man belongs now to a hundred different systems of relationship overlapping one another; a hundred different loyalties claim him; but comprehending all of them now and growing continually more insistent is our common humanity. No one can escape the common fate that awaits our species as a whole, but so far few of us apprehend as much, and still fewer have roused themselves to do anything about it. We are in the ship of human destiny but we have very little control of it. We still treat our cabins as separate ships. (My metaphor is

aulty but my intention is manifest.) The *polis* has us but we fail to take hold of the *polis*.

Aristotle's conception of political possibility never ranged beyond the city state or a league of city states, because in his time the progressive abolition of distance was inconceivable. But the Greek idea embodied in his expression "Political Animal", the treatment of the words "city" and "citizens" as reciprocal terms, the distinction between civilised and barbaric expansion as the difference between the extended city on the one hand, and, on the other, conquest and the exaction of tribute, "co-operation" and homage, has been a working opposition throughout the ages down to our own time. Rome did not begin as an Imperium. The initial idea of the Roman Republic was not an idea of conquest but assimilation; from Scotland to Samarkand men could become citizens of the city of Rome. Invention and discovery have now expanded the *polis* of Aristotle to Čosmopolis, the Barbarian is a mere gangster, a savage brought within the compass of the city, all war is crime and civil war, and it is by, through and in a world-*polis* that we live or fail to live to-day.

Manifestly, then, our Edward Albert Tewler and his neighbours in Morningside Prospect at the heart of a cosmic time bomb, must, like everybody else in the world now, display man as a Political Animal, however unawakened he may be to the real extent of his *polis*.

Considered as an assembly of Political Animals, the tenants of Morningside Prospect displayed the same quality of discreet reluctance towards harsh realities that was also manifest in their religious and philosophical attitudes. Their citizenship was a sleeping partnership. They were not pressing or attacking in these matters, so that they do not complicate our study by advancing ideas of their own and attempting to change the world in any way whatever. This simplifies them very conveniently for our purpose. A single declared Fascist or Communist or Jehovah's Witness or Single Taxer or Douglasite, for example, would have put us askew by orienting the entire Prospect to his complex of ideas and setting them organising and resisting for or against it. He would have

concentrated attention like a hornet come into a roomful of quiet people. But suchlike disturbers of the peace were far away, a distant buzzing, and the word "Bawls" protected this place of rest as effectively as an angel with a flaming fiery sword.

The whole of Morningside Prospect had made its peace with God, and it felt that if you didn't annoy God, He could be trusted not to annoy you. The faint flavour of Rome that hung about that biretta and soutane excused any persistent church going. Which would not have occurred anyhow. There would always have been some faint flavour or other in extenuation. One or two of the ladies "communicated" at Easter and assisted with the decorations at Harvest Thanksgiving. If some Buzzer had got through with whispers of unbelief, Morningside Prospect would not have argued, it would have "stood up" for God simply and firmly. If on the other hand the Redeemer of Mankind, whose authentic portraits adorned quite a number of the Prospect bedrooms, had appeared, true to those pictures, white-robed and radiant, Morningside Prospect would have quietly gone indoors, fastened the door, and watched this intrusive anachronism discreetly from behind a blind, apprehensive of any little miracles that might occur. A few with memories of their early Sunday school lessons might have felt anxious about Mrs Rooter's fig tree at the end of the row, because He was notoriously hasty with fig trees, and hers was notoriously barren.

So much for the religion of Morningside. Its attitude towards Nature was equally passive. The Prospect had dismissed any curiosity it had ever possessed about Nature. It had decided that Nature also was quite trustworthy if you didn't mess about with her. There were the Secrets of Nature, but no decent person ever dreamt of raising her skirts. There were the Wonders of Nature, but there was no need to pry into them. You just said they were wonderful. You went out and looked up at the stars on a starry night. You remained still for a time. "It makes you think," you said profoundly, and thought no more about it.

But Politics wasn't so easily dismissed. There were rates to pay and they had a tendency to go up ; there were taxes which rose steadily. There were municipal and parliamentary elections. People put handbills into the letter-boxes and canvassers came round and asked Morningside Prospect questions at which the Prospect shook its head in an enigmatical manner. It had no taste for doorstep arguments. When a general election loomed up, the public disturbance was considerable, and Morningside Prospect was forced to share it. It broke into speech. Views were exchanged, at golf and over garden fences ; newspapers with marked passages were handed about. The characters of prominent political leaders were weighed. It got as far as that. Personal experiences hitherto held in reserve were brought to light.

There was Mr Pildington who lived for many years of trusted service in a general depot at Johore. Upon any issue affecting India or the East generally, his brief utterances were felt to be final. There was Mr Stannish again, of Tintern, who had experienced the evils of Trade Unionism and the improvidence of the working class, on the clerical staff of a mining corporation in South Wales. You could tell him nothing he did not know against the Labour Party. Mr Copper of Caxton had worked with a big printing firm which produced a constellation of trade weeklies, and he came out very strongly in favour of extending the law of libel so as to restrain the publication of any criticism that was not entirely favourable and signed by the writer. His firm had made a bad debt by publishing a periodical called *Scientific Truth*, which had fallen foul of a gentleman who claimed to have discovered a cure for cancer, had denounced him as a mischievous impostor and had had to pay heavy damages and go into bankruptcy. The Plaintiff had not discovered a cure for cancer and his nostrum was deadly, but that was held by the court to be irrelevant.

Mr Copper had been partly responsible for the issue of this periodical, and the experience, he said, had taught him a lesson.

"These critics," said Mr Copper, whose intelligence was

sufficiently narrow to be acute, "these critics, you see, they disregard the capital a man lays out in building up a reputation. It's nothing to them. They just think they have the right to run him down exactly as they please. There's hardly a business that could stand it. *This case was touch-and-go*, but our chap went too far in his abuse. It's plain sense you got to put it down. There isn't a thing in heaven or earth that's safe while this criticism runs loose. So now at every election I ask the candidates whether they agree to back my Control of Criticism Bill. Had it drafted and printed all right and proper. You didn't know of that? I get pledges from both sides, always, but somehow they never seem to push it through up there. Hammer away, I say, hammer away. No need to talk about it. It's just *my hobby*, so to speak. You wouldn't care to have a copy of my Bill? You needn't read it. . . ."

All Morningside Prospect was agreed that rates and taxes had increased, were increasing and ought to be diminished. The vote was something given to the free-born citizen primarily to defend him against these assaults upon his peace of mind. So that as the election drew near, Morningside Prospect really made an effort to distinguish between the competing candidates who were seeking their suffrages, in this particular respect. Would they keep rates down and taxes down? All candidates promised gladly and there the matter ended. Brighthampton was a complex constituency with a slum district harbouring a swarm of skilled and semi-skilled workers. Morningside Prospect believed that these people of the back streets were mainly engaged in almost incredibly rapid multiplication, and shared the outspoken indignation of Dean Inge at decent people being asked to provide health and education for this unbridled pullulation of the "Unfit". Like Oliver Twist, these creatures were always asking for more, stimulated in their extravagant demands by agitators, whom Morningside Prospect believed to be invariably of foreign origin and incredible malignity. So that there was a third-party in the Brighthampton constituency, known to Morningside Prospect as the "Squandermaniacs", a Labour Party dominated by some Russian agent, Bill Smith or McAndrew

apprehensions by a vigorous advocacy of peace and to induce his fellow *Tewlers* (*var. Anglicanus*) to confirm his hope for a world in which there would be no more war, but everything else going on as usual. With all their facilities some of his subsidiaries did a bit of arms smuggling, but Sir Humbert did his very utmost not to know anything about that. He did not hesitate, as the passions of electioneering rose, to call Sir Adrian a war-monger. But this was a gross libel. Sir Adrian was not a war-monger ; he was a wholesale iron-monger.

If he had really wanted to sell war to the world, he would not have confined himself to the big battleship business. He would have gone in for financially less important equipment, for air and undersea attacks, warfare in narrow seas and with amphibious craft. But at the time of the Abyssinian crisis, when Mussolini threatened the British fleet with dive bombing, the British government had to give in ignominiously because their ships had no anti-aircraft ammunition. Little matters of that sort were chicken-food to Sir Adrian. Nothing could prove more convincingly that at heart Sir Adrian and Sir Humbert were equally pacifist and equally prepared to carry on with business during business hours and retire to their own magnificent versions of Morningside, to peerages, great mansions, ranches, yachts, mistresses, as convinced as Edward Albert that all that was going on for ever. We do these worthy men injustice to impute either wickedness or intelligence to them. They were just outsize Tewlers.

Whenever an opportunity to abolish war by any sort of vote arose, Morningside Prospect voted without hesitation and abolished it. War has been abolished again and again since 1918. The League of Nations put an end to war, the Kellogg Pact abolished it, a Peace Pledge taken by millions refused all further participation in warfare. What more could you have ? People went on making weapons out of habit, and to terminate their employment too abruptly would have caused considerable financial inconvenience. There were, however, a number of international Conferences, inspired by the noblest sentiments, to limit and restrain armaments, for which now there could never be any positive

use. You cannot be too careful, as Sir Adrian insisted. There is a negative use for armaments in these matters. Peace in a world of sovereign states is necessarily a neutralisation, an equalisation, a careful balance of gun against gun and ship against ship. You even let the belligerent Germans have a carefully-rationed army and fleet. How could they sustain public security and maintain their national self-respect without these things? What uniforms could they wear? What decorations? The adjustment of forces is no doubt a delicate one, but how else is Security possible? The Foreign Office and the Diplomatic Service saw to that with a peculiar wisdom and subtlety above the understanding of common men. . . .

All round the world, and according to their scope and scale, the Morningsides, happy in this dangerously balanced Security, pursued the even tenor of their ways, oblivious, deliberately oblivious, to the time bomb of Destiny, that ticked more and more audibly beneath their feet. Only belatedly did a certain rocking of the ground and queer outbreaks of stink and steam, assume a personal significance. Only with extreme reluctance would Edward Albert allow himself to think that this heaving danger might after all be addressed to him.

The ingredients and factors in this time bomb that is now blowing all the Morningside Prospects, all the self-complacencies of the world of *Homo Tewler* sky high, are gradually being made plain by the distressful criticism of its scattered victims. Man's own unregulated and surprising inventions and discoveries have made all the earth one simultaneous community, and released such a volume of available physical and undirected human energy as superannuates all the religious, traditional, historical methods that have hitherto kept the species going. Our circumstances demand a worldwide moral and intellectual revolution beyond all the precedents and possibilities of former times. To the very last the Tewlers in any position of advantage have been sitting upon the safety-valves of expression, of warning, information and any adaptation, until what might have been a deliberate

readjustment has become a violent explosion, an explosion that will now either blow *Homo Tewler* far up the scale of conscious being or out of the universe altogether. In which latter case we, here and now, are the last men addressing ourselves to a posterity which will never exist.

This is a sweeping statement. But you cannot write about a germ or an atom nowadays without the universe coming in. We can take nothing for granted because we have realised the reciprocity of part and whole. Our next succeeding Book must focus down again upon Edward Albert, and tell how the explosion hit and lifted him and his at last out of the contentment of Morningside Prospect altogether.

## BOOK THE FIFTH

### HOW EDWARD ALBERT TEWLER WAS OVERTAKEN BY A STORM OF WAR AND DESTRUCTION AND WHAT HE SAID AND DID IN IT

#### CHAPTER I

##### *Catspaws*

THE unpleasant buzzing of disturbing ideas and untoward events that Edward Albert had kept at a distance for the first ten years of his contentment in Morningside Prospect crept nearer to him by such imperceptible degrees that it is almost impossible to mark any definite date for the end of his agreeable stagnation. Take Morningside Prospect throughout the week of years that preceded the actual onset of the Great Warfare. What touch of foreboding wrinkled the smooth reflection it presented to the world? What catspaws warned it of the gathering hurricane?

The World War of 1914-18 had not struck the Tewler imagination as bringing with it a new ordering of life for mankind. It was, from the Tewler point of view, a fight like a dog-fight for the upper hand among things called Powers, essentially the same in their nature. They rose and they fell, like football clubs. It was just another chapter of the old history. The academic Tewlers who taught history throughout the world knew nothing, and almost passionately wanted to know nothing, of the space-time process that continually puts a fresh face on life and continually sweeps away the working appearances of the past. Their mental equipment could not handle such ideas. So how could they be expected to transmit them?

There was not a country in the world where what passed for the teaching of history was more than a training in national conceit and xenophobia, and Edward Albert, according to

his rank and scale, participated in the prevalent mental perversity. He was ready at any time to assert that the scenery of England, the wild flowers of England, the skilled labour of England (when not disturbed by foreign agitators), the horsemanship and seamanship of England, the gentry of England, the agriculture of England, the politics of England, the graciousness and wisdom of her Royal Family, the beauty of the Englishwomen, their incurable 'ealthiness of mind and body, were not to be surpassed, not even to be disputed by any other people. For that he "stood up", and all Morning-side Prospect, all England, from Sir Adrian von Stahlheim down to the dirtiest child coughing its life out in the dirtiest slum of East London "stood up". And all over the world, with the simple substitution of whatever name the local community happened to possess, *Homo Tewler* was of the same persuasion.

But the various British and French and American varieties of the species were now more cock-a-hoop and contented, because they had won the great war, than was *Homo Tewler var. Teutonicus*, who was suffering acutely in his pride and material conditions through having lost it. He was gradually persuading himself that he had never lost the war, but had been cheated in some complicated way out of his victory, and he was screwing himself up, through his schoolmasters, professors, politicians, industrialists, romantic pederasts and out-of-work professional soldiers, to the idea of a return match with the great Powers that would restore and realise his dream of world ascendancy. *Homo Tewler Gallicus* was uncomfortably aware of this state of mind beyond the frontier, but *Anglicanus* and *Americanus* thought this awareness uncharitable. . . .

One might go on thus describing the Tewler mentality in terms of that masterpiece of Tewler thought, published in 1871, *The Fight in Dame Europa's School*. To that period stuff, to the same old nationalist mythology, the schoolmasters of each successive generation put back their prey. . . .

Yet certain things did appear dimly beneath the surface of these traditional appearances, as being novel and challeng-

ing even to Edward Albert. A wave of ill-conceived and ill-organised expressions of popular discontent that disturbed the tranquil resumption of power and property by the larger salesmanship and the old authorities in the Period of Reconstruction, would have passed without any but the most incidental remarks by the contemporary historian in the general *sauve qui peut* (and then grab a bit more) of the influential classes, if it had not been for the complete collapse of the established social order throughout the vast areas of Russia. There had been social upthrusts in the past, the Commune in Paris, and talk of socialism in England, but no normally educated English child was ever allowed to know anything about these things. “ ‘Oo are these Bolsheviks ?’ ” Edward Albert had asked old Mr Blake in the middle Doober days, when the decision of Russia to go out of the Great War was shocking the minds of Power-politics-fans throughout the world.

“ Thieves and bloody murderers,” said old Mr Blake.

And then and subsequently he confided to Edward Albert the horror of this Sovietic Russia that had come upon the world. These Bolsheviks were hate and evil incarnate ; they put Satan in the shade ; they delighted in bloodshed, lust and the repudiation of their just debts. They shared their women in common and drove out their children to grow up like wild animals in the woods. They had massacred millions of people ; every day they had a massacre before breakfast. This man Lenin was conducting frightful orgies in the Kremlin, and his wife was prancing about covered with the Crown jewels and any others she could lay hands on. Nobody in Russia had had anything to eat for months. The rouble went down and down. Mr Blake had bought roubles when there was reason to suppose they would recover, and had they recovered ? *No !* And he had had a bit in Lena Goldfields. No good crying over spilt milk.

The streets of Moscow, he explained, were littered with dead murdered people like you and me. You had to pick your way among them. Everywhere the Churches had been turned into anti-God Museums. Everywhere aristocrats and

respectable people were being treated with incredible brutality and bestiality. Mr Blake seemed to have sources of information of his own, and he gave Edward Albert the most circumstantial and revolting details with an indignant gusto. "Take, for instance, something I heard the other day. . . ."

"You'd wonder how they can bring themselves to do it," said Edward Albert, not doubting in the least. Old Mr Blake offered no explanation.

The newspapers Edward Albert glanced over and the talk he heard about "these here Bolshies" during the two decades of later Georgian decadence, did little to attenuate the shock of those early impressions. When he blended his mind with the general unanimities of Morningside Prospect, he found a practical agreement that for the rest of the world outside the Soviet sphere, the less one thought about Russia the better, the "Bolshies" were thorough rascals and also blind fanatics, they were incredibly incompetent and a menace to the whole world; Stalin was just another Tsar, he was certain to be assassinated and he would found a new dynasty; private enterprise would be restored because you cannot do without it. Communism did not matter; it was spreading insidiously; it stirred up a lot of discontent among the working classes, and it ought to be put down with a firm hand. It was the hidden hand of Communism that caused labour unrest that kept wages and prices, rates and taxes, mounting and mounting, to the serious disadvantage of decent independent people who had retired and wanted to keep retired.

So round and round they went, perpetually evading the realisation that there was something in the stars and in the wicked hearts of men that would not endure Morningside Prospect for very much longer, whatever else ensued.

Mr Pildington of Johore was disposed to take a serious view of Communist activities in the East. These frightful ideas were spreading in India and China and even in Japan. "They nibble and they nibble at our prestige. It's no laughing matter."

"These ideers," said Edward Albert gloomily.

"Let's hope it will last our time," said Mr Pildington and turned to pleasanter topics. . . .

So the first transient intimations of social revolution appeared and vanished in Edward Albert's mind ; the sense of something out of order and something impending. But it was not simply the Bolshie menace alone. There was the whisper of something unsatisfactory and inadequate in the control of public affairs. In the great days of Gladstone and Disraeli, political life had been pompous and respected. Gentlemen in top hats and frock coats, used parliamentary language, obeyed the division bell, and passed through the division lobbies, and no Briton doubted that the Mother of Parliaments was the ultimate legislative and administrative machine. Then as the century unfolded, the new journalism, the unruly Irish, the appearance of a Labour Party (in all sorts of hats), votes for women and women members of Parliament, the accumulating effects of elementary education, robbed the legislature, step by step, of its male and gentlemanly prestige.

This new Parliament was by no means as agreeable to the larger Tewlers, the salesmen, the great interests and profit-making enterprises, as the old. Parliament was passing out of the hands of an essentially conservative oligarchy into those of an incoherently progressive democracy, and the oligarchy, through its press lords and its social and business influences, was developing a spirit of resistance to Parliamentary institutions, to the taxation and control of enterprise and the ever-increasing expenditure upon public services. Everywhere in the pseudo-democratic countries the process followed parallel lines. The newly enfranchised masses, awakening to the power of the vote, were reappropriating the goods of the community bit by bit to a collective use, and everywhere among the employers and wealthy, the spirit of resistance sought expression. Everywhere, in the Scandinavian countries, in blue-swastika Finland, in America after the socialisations of the New Deal, in France, in Spain before Franco, there were Quislings seeking a saviour from this awakening democracy and not knowing to whom to turn.

"Parliament is played out," said this gathering counter-revolution. "Democracy is played out."

Mr Copper of Caxton felt the need of some resistance to these unending concessions to labour demands. "What this country needs," said Mr Copper, "is leadership, firmer leadership. We want a middle-class party led by a Man." Mr Stannish of Tintern was inclined to agree with Mr Copper, but Mr Droop of London Pride, who was suspected of religious unsoundness, was disposed to be critical not of the idea but of the leader towards whom their thoughts were turning. He exhibited newspaper pictures and invited his neighbours to look at them.

"He's herring-jawed, and *I* like teeth that meet," said Mr Droop. "Why does he dress up in this sort of tights he wears? His *shape* ain't English. It isn't even decent. He seems to attach too much importance to his be'ind. Look at that one. It's a sort of hind bosom he's got. And why does he imitate them Dagos? Can't he think anything out for himself? Anything fresh? Fine outlook for us to have a leader without an original idea in his head! Ask him what we are to do, and he'll go round asking, What would Musso do? If we want a strong Englishman, let's have a strong *English* Englishman with a mind of his own, and not that sort of flibberty-gibbet. Fliberty-gibbet, I call him. Something that sways about and dangles. For good old England? No, thank you."

"Well, anyhow, we've got to be quit of this Parliament nonsense," said Mr Copper, "and all this criticising of everybody and doing nothing, while the Bolshies and Jews run away with everything we've got."

"Jews?" said Edward Albert, questioning himself.

It is interesting to note that our specimen Englishman for the first thirty years of his life was practically unaware of contemporary Jews. He thought they were a disagreeable lot of people in the Bible whom even God had had to give up at last, and that had been the end of them. We lived in the New Dispensation. He went to school with Jews and half-Jews and quarter-Jews and never perceived any distinctive

difference between them and his other school-fellows. He thought Circumcision was something religious, and enquired no further into the matter. Was Buffin Burleybank a Jew? Was Jim Whittaker? Was Evangeline Birkenhead, on either side, Jewish? It never occurred to Edward Albert to ask, and there is no need to introduce irrelevant information into this story. If Jews are so different you ought to be able to tell.

But as the vague uneasiness of the Georgian decadence spread and sought forms of expression, it was necessary to protect oneself from any sense of responsibility in the matter by finding scapegoats, and almost any outstanding group of people was exposed to the honour of vicarious atonement. A certain section of the mixture of peoples called the Jews, especially those hailing from Eastern Europe, is ghetto-conscious and suffers from an Adlerian assertiveness, and it has always been a temptation to bright young men of the Armenoid type to set up as "champions" for their "people", to revive the sense of being downtrodden if it threatens to wane and insist upon a preferential association. Jew must help Jew. Such economic bad manners reveal a universal human tendency; Scotchmen hang together, Welshmen control the milk and drapery trades in London, and so on; only the drastic contempt of more broadly civilised individuals can do anything to correct this exclusiveness.

Unhappily at the conclusion of the 1914-18 phase of the world war, the professional Jewish "champions" set themselves with particular energy to inflame this racial segregation in every possible way and to ignore as blatantly as possible the common need for a world settlement. They did not want to go on to a new world; they headed their "people" for Zion. They became Maccabean, they became heroic; boys in West Kensington dreamt of being Davids and their sisters Esthers. No public man, no writer, no journalist could go anywhere without having the Jewish Problem thrust into his face as though it was the one supreme interest of mankind. He was threatened implicitly or explicitly with boycotts and mischief if he refused his appointed rôle as a Gideonite, a

hewer of wood and a drawer of water for the Great Race. The mildest, most broadminded of humanitarians found themselves provoked into saying, "Oh, *damn* those Jews!"

Admittedly the Jews are tactless and vain and clannish, but that after all is the worst that can be said about the worst of them. The most they did was to irritate. The great Jewish conspiracy is and always has been a fantasy.

But it was disastrous of these champions and leaders of Jewry, considering how widely dispersed and how vulnerable their "people" were, to make them so conspicuous in a world in urgent need of scapegoats. *Homo Tewler Teutonicus*, licking his sore vanity after defeat, found himself all too ready to be persuaded that he had been betrayed to defeat by the Jews. Morningside Prospect throughout the western world, looking for some scapegoat to explain the increased rocking of the financial boat, found it plausible to attribute it to "international finance" and easy to believe that international finance was essentially Jewish. It is not. It is less so than ever it was.

And come to think of it, said the Christian Churches, why, in spite of all our educational efforts, are congregations shrinking and our people losing their religious ardour? Some one, something, not ourselves, must be to blame. Why are our flocks restricting their birth-rate, while Jews, as we all know, invariably have *enormous* families? Why is there this increasing incredulity in the beautiful incomprehensible dogmas of our religion? How can people disbelieve what they cannot possibly understand unless they are stirred up by mischief-makers? And what is there at the back of this upset in Godless Russia, which was once so devoted to the Little Father on earth and his and Our Father in Heaven? You can read all about the ramifications of these satanic plottings in Mrs Nesta Webster's *Secret Societies and Subversive Movements*. Or you can study how the new pogromism was revived in that curious and impudent forgery, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. There you see how craziness festers into mania.

That, in terms of general contemporary history, is the why and wherefore of the world epidemic of pogrom fever in the

second Georgian period, and that is why Edward Albert, our microcosm, leaning over his garden gate and talking to Mr Copper, remarked, "These here Jews seem to be doing a lot of mischief in the world, one way and another."

And why Mr Copper, already thoroughly infected, replied, "And we let 'em get away with it—every time."

You see here in Morningside Prospect in our Edward Albert just the same threefold mental stir that was to be found in the whole Morningside Prospect side of civilisation ; the sick dread of some profound rearrangement of economic and social relationships impending, a dread expressing itself defensively in an irrational fear of "Bolshevism" ; the same unpleasant realisation of a common nerveless conduct of affairs leading to the craving for a saviour and leader, and the same disposition to discover a scapegoat, for which rôle the Jewish Champions were already preparing their "people". The world now and henceforth is doomed to live in an increasing community of interpretations, and these three factors were to be found among the threatened governing classes, all round the globe from pole to pole. The Bolshie, the Jew and the inspired Leader, all essentially imaginary beings, were becoming the three cardinal figures in a new mythology of escape from thought, starkness and courage.

Wherever the pound sterling and the dollar were current and freely exchangeable with local money, this mythology prevailed, masking the hard realities of the abolition of distance, the ever-increasing release of physical and human energy and the gathering resentment of the poor, the exploited and the frustrated majority of mankind. These triple ingredients brewed the final explosion of the Old Order, which that triple mythology prevented men from anticipating and averting.

But if that mythology was world-wide, it still varied greatly in its realisation in different regions of the earth. There were great differences in phase. *Homo Tewler* in his Western, Scandinavian and Polish varieties was not so widely different from *Anglicanus* ; he presented the same mythological triangle and the same underlying forces, but until America had that

rather alarming financial jolt in 1932 which put an end to its "sturdy individualism" for ever, there was not the same apprehension of possible calamity that was setting all Europe peering about for scapegoats and conspirators. But, as the New Deal unfolded, American myth and reality began to take on an increasing parallelism with Europe. In Russia the Muscovite *Homo Tewler*, after a tremendous constructive effort after the war, and after a phase of experimental strain and stress, lapsed for a time under the autocratic rule of a Saviour, forgetting or liquidating the old Bolsheviks and feeling no need for any other victims.

*Homo Tewler Teutonicus*, sharing the new mythology, was nevertheless in a different and more formidable mood than any of its neighbours in the world. It was smarting from a sense of accepted defeat and sustained disadvantage. It was very much in the state of mind of Edward Albert in the days when he endured the punches of Horry Budd and pretended not to mind them. It was working up to the "Vad-a-nuff-o-vis" phase and the hysterical and vicious smacking of that young gentleman's face. Sooner or later *Homo Tewler Teutonicus* was bound to fight. The particular event that fired the magazine belonged to the chapter of accidents. The British Government played the part of those Bolter's College Old Boys who lost their match through stupid over-confidence, and so put spunk into Edward Albert. They put spunk in the faltering German patriot. If it had not been the Nazi triumvirate of Goering, Goebbels and Hitler, it might have been the much more formidable Germany of the Strasser brothers. Or some other combination. But at the contemporary level of world intelligence it was as inevitable as dawn a week ahead, that Germany would start a war.

But what the world mind had still to grasp was the tremendous increase in destructive energy that had occurred since the clearing-up wars that followed the Treaty of Versailles. Even the people, the Fascists and Nazis who were most obviously and ostentatiously setting their feet upon the war path, had only a very feeble premonition of the immense smash they were going to make. Many

people thought that war was approaching again ; even Edward Albert remarked that " all this here armament don't look like peace for ever, does it ? Something ought to be done about it." But they thought always of the old sort of war and not of war right out of control and a world blown to smithereens. And Morningside Prospect thought no more of warfare on its own golf links than of Martians out of the sky. Talk about disarmament went on among the representative Tewlers gathered at Geneva, but the arms salesmen made sure that these deliberations came to nothing.

Edward Albert became aware of Adolf Hitler, not as a personal enemy who was going to shatter all the complacencies of his life, but as a strange, rather comic, figure in that pleasantly defeated Germany, somewhat about the time of the Reichstag fire. Mrs Tewler was shopping in Gage and Höpler's emporium and Edward Albert was waiting for her in the convenient waiting-room beyond the soda fountain and the Hairdressing. He picked up an illustrated paper and found pictures of the Fuehrer in full blast.

" Look at that," said Edward Albert.

" What's he so excited about ? "

" Politics."

" Looks as if he ought to be took care of somewhere. He's worse than that great ugly Mussolini. People like that didn't ought to be let go about loose, all dressed up and 'owling and threatening everyone who don't agree with them. You don't know what mischief they may do sensible people."

Thus Mary, revealing an anticipatory gleam of *sapiens* in her composition.

" No affair of ours," said Mr Tewler, true to type, true to the specific quality that will never see what is coming to it until after it has been hit.

Later on he became more aware of the Nazi triumvirate and more particularly of " This here Hitler".

Mr Copper of Caxton and Mr Standish of Tintern, in particular, were inclined to take a favourable view of this now rising star. " He may have his faults," said Mr Copper,

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" but he and Musso stand like bulwarks between us and the Bolshies. Never forget that. And as for his treatment of them Jews—well, they *ask* for it."

" They do do that," said Edward Albert.

" You can't trust a Jew with a fair-haired girl-servant. Same thing at Hollywood. I expect poor Hitler has his story to tell. And then these French. They've treated the Germans *badly*. How would you like to go out on the links and find some great Senegalese nigger running about and raping every English girl he sets eyes on? I was reading a bit in a book the other day by Mr Arthur Bryant. There's things flesh and blood won't stand."

That gave Edward Albert food for thought. He tried to think of himself as Sir Galahad clearing Soudanese niggers off the links and comforting their victims by a kind word or so before starting his round.

Mr Pildington said that bringing coloured soldiers to Europe had been a great mistake. " The tales they take back! No respect left in them. . . . We did it and the French did it and we shall pay for it. Mark my words. . . ."

" One thing we must never forget about Mussolini," said the vicar of Casing to Mrs Rooter in an earnest friendly talk at Harvest Thanksgiving. " Mustard gas or no mustard gas, he did put back the crucifix in the schools. I could forgive him many things for that."

But Mrs Tewler took a different view

" These violent men ought to be put under control now," she said. " They'll do the world a mischief."

" The more mischief they do the Bolshies and Jews the better I shall be pleased," said Edward Albert. " There's worse things in the world than holding up a hand and saying ' Heil Hitler! ' After all, it's only like standing up to ' God save the King ' in their German way."

## CHAPTER 2

*The Storm Breaks*

UP to the middle of 1939 the incredulous confidence of Morningside Prospect sustained itself throughout all the regions of the earth that were still untouched by destruction. In Spain, in the May of '37, Goering boasted that he demonstrated the strength of the German air force—at that time—by the destruction of the ancient Basque city of Guernica. The place was practically destroyed, the population massacred and the world horrified. But it was done with planes and bombs that would have seemed beneath contempt to the airmen of four years later.

So, too, the exploits of the Japanese bombers in China ; the blazing houses, the heaped dead, the smashed women and children, and the rapes and murders of the invaders, were accepted by the world as the last word in frightfulness instead of mere earnest of worse ahead. When again the Italians clenched their conquest of Abyssinia by the surprise use of mustard gas, which they had expressly agreed to abandon, it seemed as though treachery and bad faith had made their crowning triumph. All these events which people with untrammelled imaginations would have realised were mere intimations and sketches of things to come, were treated as being the final achievement of destructiveness. Why were people so stupid ? The facts are plain enough. There was and there is no visible limit to the size and range of aircraft. They were, they are, certain to go on increasing in power and speed so long as air war remained a possibility. What else can happen ? Neither was there any limit apparent to the destructive power of a bomb, which again must increase to world-destroying dimensions. Nor was there any perceptible limit to the amount of misdirection and social disorganisation that could be achieved by sustained lying, by the use of poisons, infections, blockades and terrorism. The human mind was amazingly reluctant to look these glaring inevitabilities in the face.

Tewler Americanus in particular was irritated by a harsh logic that overrode his dearest belief in his practical isolation, whenever he chose to withdraw himself, from the affairs of the rest of the world. He had escaped from the old world and he hated to feel that he was being drawn back to share a common destiny with the rest of mankind.

By the summer of 1939 the blowing-up of the old civilisation was proceeding briskly. It was a progressive process. It went from strength to strength. It was a spreading fire in an uncharted wilderness of explosives. There was not one forth-right bang of everything. It was much more like a big series of magazines and oil stores of unknown depth and extent, blowing up and blazing one after another, each outbreak starting and incorporating still more violent explosions. The fighting of '39 was mild in comparison with '40, and '40 was mild in comparison with '41. Nobody had planned this. There is no sign in *Mein Kampf* of any realisation on the part of Rudolf Hess and Adolf Hitler that they had fired a limitless mine. They felt they were brilliant cynical lads who had taken the world by surprise. As a matter of fact, modern warfare took them by surprise. By 1941 they were as helplessly anxious as everybody else to put out the fire again and crawl away with any loot they could lay their hands on.

Goering promised that no allied air raids should ever distress the German homeland. He probably made that promise in perfect good faith. For a time he had the upper hand and the German public had little to complain of. They made war in the lands of other peoples according to a century-old tradition. War has still to come home to them. Whatever the allies did to Germany, said Goering, he would retaliate tenfold. What he did not realise until it was too late was that he had no monopoly in this war weapon he was using and that the Luftwaffe he had launched would not only kick back but grow to overwhelming dimensions.

In '40 the Germans nearly won the war with the great tank and the dive-bomber. Then opportunity passed. In '41 tanks were pouring out of factories by the thousand, and both

Britain and Russia and America were drawing ahead of the German outfit in quantity and quality alike.

In 1941 the Nazis, feeling the nets closing about their adventure, struck hysterically at Russia, and for the first time encountered a people who had divested themselves of their Morningside encumbrance, who were united in their dislike to the German *herrenvolk* and fought with an undivided mind. They had discovered that in warfare you cannot be too careless. "Safety last!" said the Russians. The Russians, falling back slowly upon their main line of defence, "scorching the earth" before this last convulsive thrust of the Nazi, were something very different from the crowded fugitives in the milder, already out-moded warfare of Holland, Belgium and France. War mounted another step in the scale of destruction, and aeroplanes and tanks by the thousand fought gigantic fleet actions upon land.

The old wars of history ebbed as they exhausted the scanty resources of their period, but this new warfare gathered destructive force as it went on.

In the summer of 1941 it was evidently dawning upon the central group of Nazis that the theory of totalitarian war was unsound, because of this unanticipated and uncontrollable crescendo. They began to gabble of a new world order. But they had lied so unscrupulously and professed lying so unblushingly that now even the British Hessians and the American Lindberghs could hardly pretend to believe them. They had destroyed their own ladder of escape and, as a gang at any rate, they were doomed. But that does not mean that the crescendo of destruction would come to an end. Their elimination would be of little more significance by itself than the sinking of a ship or the destruction of a tank. Even the Germans would hardly miss them. There is no dearth of feeble-minded mascots in central Europe. The world would still have a vindictive post-Hitler Germany recovering its strength for a new Fuehrer and a new convulsion; pluto-Christian democracy would still be showing its unclean and irregular teeth at the dreaded Bolshevik. World disaster would at the best, take breath, before deeper and higher and

wider detonations scattered the shreds of the Christian peace. Billions of lies, millions of foul murders, persecution, organised indignity, none of these things can save a world still dominated by mercenary Christian nationalism from the Avenging Fates.

But none of the people who embody the *Tewler* mind in governments and authorities seem able to see a yard ahead of anything they do. They are as capable of starting trouble as monkeys with matches, and as little capable of coping with the result.

"Cosmopolis in thought and life, or extinction," says Destiny, toying idly with the bones of a Brontosaurus and awaiting the decision of *Homo Tewler* without haste indeed, but also without any touch of hesitation. "Time is almost up, *Homo Tewler*. Which shall it be?"

## CHAPTER 3

### A.R.W. and H.G.

**W**HICH shall it be? We may set about the answer in either of two reciprocal ways. Throughout this story from the very beginning the same choice of aspects has confronted us. We can ask, can the species as a whole achieve this tremendous feat of adaptation demanded of us? Or we can turn to the individual samples we have selected for examination and ask whether, with such material, there is any hope of arresting the blazing catastrophe that now detonates about us? If there is hope, however faint it may be, in Edward Albert Tewler, then there is that much hope for the world. If world revolution is not latent and credible in his circle, in his offspring and outcome, in the reactions he evokes and the chain of consequence he transmits, then is it equally impossible and incredible of his species as a whole.

Our double answer must end in a note of interrogation.

Let us tell first of all, as simply and plainly as possible, the behaviour of our hero during the world conflagration, and then swing our attention round to the battling ideas and

interpretations in which that behaviour was framed and shaped. We have to deal faithfully with the traditions and wisdom of the human past, the divinities, the mighty reputations, the vast long-unquestioned assumptions by which the *Tewler* mind has been enslaved and stultified. If the Tewlers are timid and disingenuous fools by education and enslavement rather than by birth, there may be hope for them. There may be salvation for them yet, without the intervention of a quite impossible saviour.

As the storm broke, Edward Albert's first reaction was an extreme indisposition to take any part in it whatever.

At the outset we had to tell of the marked reluctance of Edward Albert to live at all. The normal human being is born against its will. It has to be thrust and lugged into this chilly and disconcerting universe. Edward Albert, you will remember, took twenty-three hours. The first noise he made was a cackle of protest. We have told with all necessary particularity of his cowering childhood and the slow appearance in him of an urge of revolt and self-assertion.

Even as a child he was not purely fear and submission. He could put out his tongue at caged lions ; he could feel a stir of scepticism about the All-seeing God. Lust broke through a net of dread and religious uglification to the squalid satisfactions we have detailed. Something could rebel in him.

The education he received was cramping and old-fashioned even for his time. But the old traditions of sectarian misdirection still in spite of a certain advance in technical efficiency, cripple and distort the general mind. "All that has been changed," cry indignant teachers under criticism. But the evidence that this teaching of theirs still fails to produce a public that is alert, critical and capable of vigorous readjustment in the face of overwhelming danger, is to be seen in the newspapers that satisfy the *Tewler* public, the arguments and slogans that appeal to it, the advertisements that succeed with it, the stuff it swallows. It is a press written by *Homo Tewler* for *Homo Tewler* all up and down the scale. The *Times* Tewler, the *Daily Mail* Tewler, the *Herald*, the *Tribune*, the *Daily Worker* ; there is no difference except a difference

in scale and social atmosphere. Through them all ran the characteristic *Tewler* streak of wilful ignorance, deliberate disingenuousness and self-protective illusion.

The opening phase of world catastrophe took Edward Albert completely by surprise.

A slogan that dominated the English world at that time was "Safety First". In his childhood, Edward Albert remembered there had been a card with that inscription upon the mantelshelf of his mother's living-room, but that had been a chance anticipation. He could not remember how it had got there or what became of it. The Safety First phase in British history came later, and it was largely due to an organised campaign on the part of the Insurance companies, transport services, and all the great damages-paying corporations, to train the public not to incur damage. It spread through the whole social body ; it intensified the respectful feudal tradition that you cannot be too careful if you want to avoid trouble ; it infected and dominated the administration of the country ; it became the national motto. *Dieu et mon Droit* was felt to be an old-fashioned piece of swagger that might easily get us into difficulties. So that when at last Mr Neville Chamberlain gave up appeasement, in a fit of exasperation at the unendurable mockery of his umbrella, and declared war, Edward Albert, in common with a very considerable number of his comfortable independent fellow-citizens, made no attempt whatever to join in the fray. He concentrated his thoughts very largely on the discreet husbanding of his investments and whatever safe forms of tax evasion could be discovered.

Throughout the later months of 1939 *Tewler* England and *Tewler* France did not so much wage war as evade it. They potted at the enemy from behind the Maginot line and left Poland to its fate. They watched Russia readjust its frontiers in preparation for the inevitable struggle against the common enemy with profound disapproval. That Prince of Tewlers, the young King of the Belgians, obstinately refused to prepare a common front against the gathering onslaught. He was neutral, master in his own country, he insisted, and nothing

could happen to him. He uttered a squeal for help when his frontier collapsed upon him and vanished from the scene, and all the King's horses and all the King's men will never restore a Europe that will have any rôle for him again. The military science of France and England required that when an army is outflanked it should either retreat headlong or surrender. When confronted by a pincer-like movement, a soldier and a gentleman abandons his men and material and bolts home, ascribing his defeat to the decadent morals of the time. The British tradition then was a Day of Prayer. But wars are won by ungentlemanly persons who break the recognised rules of war and swear freely. The reaction of Almighty Providence to these Anglican praying bouts was ambiguous. The English and French strategists got themselves soundly licked by tanks, planes and this professional horror of nippers, and they were rather scandalised by the obstinacy of their men who insisted upon going on fighting until disaster took on an appearance of glorious retreat. Goebbels had only to say "Envelopment" or "Penetration", and the confidence of the American and English military experts ran out at their heels. Pétain surrendered France. Until that happened Morningside Prospect had seemed a whole world away from bloodshed and violence. But the French collapse sent a shock through the villas. Newspapers fluttered at the garden gates and men sat in the golf club house with grave faces and stopped to talk war upon the tees.

The Prospect had felt very stout-hearted about the U-boat sinkings and the German sea raiders. Its confidence in *our* navy was uncritical and complete. It gloried vicariously when the ship-saving instincts of the Admiralty were outraged by the *Ajax* and the *Achilles*, and Nelson came down from his aloofness in Trafalgar Square to revive the traditions of mutinous in-fighting. Morningside had never believed that our island frontiers could be scaled. And then came a positive air invasion of Britain. This scared and impressed the Prospect very greatly, and it was only a year later that a belated but well-written pamphlet told them and the world all about the Battle of Britain. What was more obvious was

that air raids were increasing at a great pace and that the Battle of the Atlantic was affecting the grocers' bills. There had been black-out regulations in operation after November 1939, but the Prospect had never taken them very seriously until the autumnal raids of 1940. Then the mutual watchfulness of the neighbours was stimulated to the pitch of acerbity. Mr Copper of Caxton, in spite of his mature years, almost had a fight with a young fool on leave who was actually *smoking a cigarette!* outside one of the Celestial Prospect villas, and he followed this up by a denunciatory visit to the Brighthampton Police. The Brighthampton Police asked Mr Copper if he couldn't perhaps do something to help, instead of just giving trouble.

Mr Copper was before all things a clear-headed man. "It's come to a point when people like us have got to look after things a bit," he said to Mr Pildington. "We ought to have some sort of Vigilantes about."

Mr Pildington thought there ought to be a Committee of Public Safety. "There's people," he said, "been coming up air raid nights and sleeping out on the links. It isn't safe. It isn't—orderly. We ought to call a meeting." In a week the idea was well in hand. There was a suggestion that either Sir Humbert Compostella or Lord Foundry, formerly Sir Adrian von Stahlheim, be made chairman, but Sir Humbert, it seemed, was on a mission to America for an indefinite period, with his entire family, to organise American and British trade relations, and Lord Foundry was too deeply occupied with the production of munitions to be able to spare the time. He was known to advocate the production of tanks of the land ironclad type on a large scale, but so far the British military authorities had only been badly defeated twice by these unsportsmanlike weapons, and Lord Foundry had an up-hill job to put his ideas into operation. By the summer of '41, however, he was making the country tank-conscious. But I anticipate. The meeting was in October, '40. There was some doubt about inviting Mr Droop to the meeting. "I can't stand that leg-pulling of his," said Mr Copper, "when it comes to serious things."

But liberal ideas prevailed and Mr Droop came to the meeting and didn't bring up any nasty snarks about Sir Oswald Mosley or anything unpleasant of that sort. Indeed in some ways he was almost helpful.

The Committee met and passed several resolutions. They would employ the two jobbing gardeners who worked the Prospect as night watchmen and they would make a subscription to the Local Defence Volunteers. They then dispersed, thinking heavily. "I don't like the way things are going," said Edward Albert to his Mary. "I feel somehow we ought to be doing more about it."

"What could you do?" asked Mary.

"I think we ought to have drilling on the links."

"They'd cut up the greens," said Mary.

"We could keep 'em off the greens," said Edward Albert.

"We could keep a member on the links to see to that."

The Local Defence Volunteers became a useful receptacle for elderly military men conversant with the tactics of fifty years ago, but still anxious to impart ideas of duty, discipline, social respect and restrain the notorious panic possibilities of the lower orders. Presently the Volunteers were actually drilling, three days a week, with sticks and old rifles, while representatives of the committee watched over the amenities of the links.

These formidable preparations were subjected to a certain amount of ungenerous criticism by people who had seen something of the fighting in Spain, France, Holland and elsewhere, and after due consideration the military authorities issued their white armlets and changed their names to the Home Guard, H.G.s.

The larger and richer British Tewlers had always had a profound and perhaps justifiable fear of an armed population, and for a time it was debated whether such weapons as were available ought not to be kept under armed guard at some strategic point and only actually issued to the men when the invader was already in the country. Time enough then for a policeman or somebody to knock them up and tell them what was afoot. In the event of German troops actually appearing,

the Home Guard was to communicate the sinister news to the nearest policeman, who would act according to the printed instructions which in most cases had not yet been delivered to him. All road signs were removed, all maps called in, and every arrangement made for any British forces that might be in being, to get hopelessly lost in their own country.

Meanwhile the detonations of the war mounted to new levels of horror and violence. The ever-mounting flames advanced more and more closely towards Edward Albert. He found his own anxiety reflected in the faces of his neighbours. He talked in his sleep. He dreamt of a gigantic figure, the War God Mars, but rather like Lord Kitchener in the early posters, pointing a vast forefinger at him. "What is that fellow there doing? I want *him*."

It was no good pleading his defective health. He had already gone down to a Brighthampton doctor for a thorough overhaul. He had said nothing about it to Mary for fear of alarming her needlessly. He had been stripped, punched, X-rayed, sampled, tested for eyesight (slight astigmatism), everything. "Sound as a bell," said the doctor. "Congratulations. They'll be calling up you forty-twentys in no time now."

"I can't stand by and do nothing," he told Morningside. "I'm going to qualify for the Home Guard now."

His action brought Mr Droop to the same decision, but Mr Copper and Mr Stannish preferred to do clerical work in Brighthampton that would release younger men for the forces. But the designer of tessellated pavements who had been holding out as a conscientious objector with an unsound lung, was suddenly excited by Edward Albert's example, recanted his objections and joined up for training. His wife was already in uniform as a tram conductor. Mrs Rooter also appeared in an authoritative get-up. She was some sort of accessory policewoman, detailed to protect the stray girlhood of Brighthampton from the immoral impulses that brought them up like moths at twilight to the Prospect Estate. Her flickering electric torch, her sudden challenge like the voice of conscience, was apt to be belated. "What's this?" she

would say. " You can't do this, you know, here. You really can't."

They had thought otherwise, and more often than not they had.

Naturally enough Edward Albert and his friends discussed the Home Guard from various points of view. At first very few people had considered it as an actual fighting force. It was just another unimplemented threat to Hitler. " Let him come and he'd jolly well see," was the idea. " We'd see what Jerry would do first and then we'd tackle him." We were not like these here Frenchies. And so forth.

Mr Copper's idea was that the job of the Home Guards was first and foremost to keep order and prevent any guerilla fighting that might provoke Jerry to reprisals. " Don't give him an excuse," said Mr Copper. " And when the war is over you'll be a sort of supplementary police to suppress strikers and mutineers and all that sort of thing. The country's bound to be in a rotten state."

But Mr Droop held that when the war began to turn at last against Germany we might send an expeditionary force into Europe (" God help us ! " said Mr Stannish), and then the Home Guards would have to defend the country against any counter-raids. So it ought to be armed and trained as a real modern fighting force. Apparently that was being done in some parts of the country, but not in others. There was, said the authorities, " considerable local autonomy." That is to say, the authorities suffered from the common characteristic of *Homo Tewler* the whole world over, an undetermined confusion of ideas. So long as they behaved with a certain mean discretion, the particular things they did were of secondary importance.

Throughout the early months of '41, the Brighthampton Home Guard was a black-out and curfew Home Guard. Then came a violent change of policy. Somewhere higher up, there was positive knowledge that Jerry had carefully worked-out plans for an experimental raid on the Brighthampton district. There was to be a try-out in the Cretan fashion with parachutists and crashed troop carriers. There was to be a

support of small swift craft. The British were in possession of the German plans a month ahead of the event. At a stroke, preparations became swift, secret and competent. Suddenly Canadian and some Polish troops appeared in the district in a sort of unobtrusive abundance, and the local Home Guard, reinforced by specially trained key men, was put through a course of combatant training at headlong speed.

" Practically I'm a guerilla so'jer," said Edward Albert to his wife. " Think of it ! If I see a German I've got to shoot him or disarm him and he has the right to shoot me at sight, if he sees me first. It isn't at all the sort of thing I'm good at. I've said that very likely I'd be *much* more useful somewhere else. And now they're asking for you to come and help with this here camouflage. They paint a chap up so's he don't look like anything on earth, green and black and great dabs like cow droppings and things. They say I've got to paint my face and hands *green* ! Then I've got to crawl about there on the links with a rifle, ready to take up a position and pot at them when they come."

" Maybe they won't come."

" We got to be ready."

" The world's gone mad," said Mary Tewler, and added after reflection ; " I suppose we got to 'umour it."

So she camouflaged Edward Albert until you might have trodden on him before you realised he was there.

## CHAPTER 4

### *Heroic Moment*

INCH by inch Edward Albert was sucked nearer and nearer towards the vortex of this ever more frightful war. He who had always dressed so carefully, became a jumble of garbage crouching on the links, a flattened Jack on the Green. . . .

If you had told him late in 1940, that in a year's time he would be an invisible man crawling through the midst of a

raid to some position of comparative personal security, with a deafening anti-aircraft barrage beating the wits out of him, and flares and parachutists and a number of gigantic troop carriers raining down upon him, he would probably have contrived some minor mutilation that would have absolved him from any active participation in that sort of thing. A vague self-reproach floundered through the thudding and jumping in his brain.

"Bloody fool I been," he muttered. "Never saw a thing ahead."

That was his state of mind, within ten minutes of the moment that transfigured him into a national hero.

What happened was very simple. Tucked up at last under a bunker, Edward Albert felt secure from anything but a direct hit. There he could abide the issue, prepared to emerge either for surrender or the cheering when comparative quiet was restored. And then he became aware of men crawling discreetly up the other side of the bunker. He screwed his head round to look at them and perceived a gleam of bayonets. There were at least three of them. The heads whispered and waited for an interval. Then one of these shadowy men fired a shot at something ahead and a second jumped down within a yard of Edward Albert and pointed. They began to talk very rapidly—in Polish. But to Edward Albert, Polish and German were all one. The next man might tread on him and he'd be bayoneted for a certainty. They'd all stick their bayonets into him.

With a wild yell he leapt to his feet and ran.

They shouted something and ran after him. And right ahead he saw a group of dark figures struggling with parachutes and encumbrances. And they too were shouting German!

Germans behind him, Germans before him, and no hope of quarter!

I have told my story badly if I have given you the impression that Edward Albert was an abject coward. Probably no being who is properly nourished is that. Young ~~men~~ are easily terrified, but I am speaking of adults. My

shown you a human being growing up in a debasing and discouraging social atmosphere, so that he was not so much born mean as had had meanness thrust upon him. All Edward Albert's story, like the true story of every human being, is a story of resentments and rebellions, cramped and limited though they were. You have seen how he broke through his dispositions and astonished Horry Budd. You have seen him astonishing the female of his species. Now, cornered as he imagined himself to be and hopeless, he broke through his cowering "instinct of self-preservation", as they call it, altogether, and revealed himself a thing of frantic violence.

His yell became a yell of despair and hatred. He leapt upon his fate. His green face and fluttering scraps of garbage bounding out of the night amidst the concussions of the battle must have had a nightmare effect upon those fumbling and uncertain young Nazis. He whirled his rifle round his head, smiting these dismayed and entangled men to the earth, beating them down, heedless of their belated cries of "*Kamerad!*!" He had killed four men and disabled seven others before the three Poles who had been running after him came up to complete his victory.

"While we were waiting for supports to come up," they testified, "he leapt out of the ground at our feet, shouted to us to follow him, and rushed the position the enemy detachment was trying to consolidate. . . ."

It became apparent to Edward Albert that he was having his hand shaken by a Polish officer who spoke some English. The climax of the uproar within his brain and without, was past. Slowly but surely the realisation of what he had done dawned upon him.

He rearranged the facts with the same readiness with which he had accepted his triumph in the annual cricket match. The sunrise revealed the complete failure of the German attempt to test the strength of the Brighthampton coast defences. They had established no foothold. The mopping-up was over and there had been remarkably few casualties among the defenders. Mostly these had occurred among the exposed gunners on the beach beyond Casing East Cliff. A minimised

account of the whole affair—lest panic be created—was released in the one o'clock bulletin. And Edward Albert, his heroism further developed by a liberal experience of Polish vodka, returned, weary, excessively dirty, drunk and triumphant to his home. Mr Droop and the pavement designer had preceded him. They had reported that he had been in the thick of the fighting with some Poles and Canadians, but he had not been hurt, they had seen him afterwards drinking at the Polish canteen, and so Mary and the whole of battle-scarred Morningside (for there were scores of broken windows) were out to receive him.

He was not singing, but if you had seen him on a silent film you would have thought he was singing. There was song in his gestures. He looked less like the seemly, almost punctiliously dressed golfer for whom she did her wisely duty than an intoxicated piece of hedge.

As he drew near her, and the neighbours closed in around him, he uttered these words.

"We mopped 'em up," he said.

"Taint all you've mopped up," said Mrs Tewler.

"Them Poles are so'jers and gent'l'men. Gent'men, mind you. They're the boys! Nat'lly I had to have a drop with them. This vodka. . . . Cleanest drink I ever 'ad. . . ."

"Tell us all about it," said Mr Pildington.

"Not till he's had a wash and a rest," said Mrs Tewler.  
"He's fairly done up."

"I'm fairly done up," said this staggering mass of garbage, leaning heavily upon her. She guided him home.

"I'm so glad they didn't hurt him," she said. "He hasn't got a scratch."

As she mothered him through his bath and into his bed, he was partly asleep and partly meditative on his own astonishing exploits.

"I let 'em have it—right *and* left. . . .

"Get out of England, I says, you come to the wrong place. . . .

"Just mur' with these Jerries—they don't know '*ow* to fight. Gaw knows what they thought they were doing. "Kamerad,

he says, Kamerad ! One chap I 'it. Fat lot of *Kamerad* 'e got out of me. . . ."

In the course of twenty-four hours Edward Albert reappeared in the world of men clean and in his right uniform, as anxious as anyone to learn the particulars of the great fight he had been in. His camouflage suit had been injured beyond repair, and his wife was reconstructing it. Stephen Crane, when he wrote his *Red Badge of Courage*, found that what he got from the ordinary veteran of the American Civil War, was what the man had read about his battles in the newspapers. That had served to rationalise and give phrases for his own fierce jumble of memories. Edward Albert was in an exactly parallel state of mind. His reconstruction of his story was greatly facilitated by the romantic generosity of the gallant Polish officer, only too anxious to give an Englishman credit for leadership in the little affair, and only too eager to elaborate the story with all and sundry, over a glass or so of vodka. In spite of the Ministry of Information, a rumour that a real Cretan air landing had been repulsed at Brighthampton spread to London. About ten days later a "postscript" upon the London wireless told the Polish officer's version of the story, suppressing all names and dates, and the incident was cabled in appreciative terms to America, to illustrate the invincible spirit of the ordinary unpretending Englishman. Edward Albert began to realise where he stood now in the world's esteem. He was the ordinary unpretending Englishman, who had to be stung to show his mettle ; and then it was he thought of his chosen epitaph, "Deeds not Words".

Only in one quarter did he feel the chill breath of scepticism and that was where a happy husband might least expect it. She listened ; she asked no questions ; but she made him feel unreal even to himself.

So that when at last the people up there decided to mark their appreciation of the Brighthampton incident by a temperate distribution of honours, and the George's Cross fell to Edward Albert, it was Mary to whom he hurried first.

"I don't deserve it," he said

"Don't deserve what ? "

"I only did what any Englishman would have done."

She waited patiently.

"It's really meant for the whole platoon of us. It's what I have to wear for all of them."

"You can't wear it until it's dry."

"Wear what?"

"That camouflage."

"I wasn't talking of that. No. Mary! They're going to give me the George's Cross. The George's Cross for courage. Aren't you glad?"

"If it's a pleasure to you, Tcddy."

"But it's wonderful, Mary! Don't you see how wonderful it is?"

"It's wonderful. Yes. . . . There's no telling what they won't do next," said Mary.

## CHAPTER 5

### *The End of Homestead*

MRS TEWLER, for reasons that she never made clear, refused to go up to Buckingham Palace and see her husband decorated by the King. "It isn't anything *I* did," she said. "All I did was to camouflage your clothes and hope you wouldn't get into trouble. I shouldn't know what to do or where to look up there. I suppose we should be pushed about by a lot of dressed-up officials in uniforms and orders and stars and stared at by Princes and Court Ladies watching us like animals, watching to see how we took it. There'll be the King wearing his crown and the Queen wearing hers, and I'd be so worked up that if either of their crowns got a bit cock-eyed I'd have hysterics. You don't want your wife to have hysterics, do you, Teddy? I'm afraid of that. And I'm afraid of those other women we shall meet, all those poor souls, widows who've lost their men and mothers who've lost their sons, being made a show of, and us—just glorying. I couldn't look

them other women in the face. No. It would be indecent of us, Teddy, King or no King. . . ."

It crept into Edward Albert's mind, almost for the first time in his married life, that perhaps Mary had "ideers". But he dismissed the horrid thought forthwith. No. Mary was shy. She was not sure of herself and she saw the whole business in the wrong colours. It was going to be much more like shaking hands. She had to be reassured and laughed out of these notions. So he began by being instructive and persuasive, and it was only as her inflexible firmness gave no sign of yielding to his urgency that he passed on to deep offence.

"Oh, what's the good of argument?" he cried. "I understand. *Don't I understand!* Whatever I was or whatever I did, I don't believe you'd take a pride in me."

But Mrs Tewler was a wise woman and she preferred an inexpressive silence to repartee.

She spoke again presently. "I couldn't get any sort of proper dress made in time, and you'd be the last person to have me go shabby. With all them photographers about, not to mention their Majesties."

"I've never grudged your dress allowance," said Edward Albert. "Now *have* I? And mostly you've spent it getting treats for that boy."

"It's my fault," said Mrs Tewler. "But that won't make dresses now. It's all been so sudden."

"*Can't* you do something? It's for you I want to go morn' myself. Shabby or not shabby; I'd like to say, 'This is the woman I owe everything to, bar my mother. She's made me what I am to-day.' I'd tell my story to the interviewer chaps. Love Story of a 'Ero. They'd take your portrait and put it in all the papers. One on the eye for Mrs Evangeline, eh? She's bound to see it somewhere. I been thinking of that all along."

Even that triumph did not allure Mary.

"No, you don't mean to come," he said at last at a climax of exasperation. "You don't mean to come and you won't. Directly I answer one objection, you make another. You can be as obstinate as a mule, Mary, as obstinate and unreasonable.

You don't seem to realise what all this means to me. You don't care. I did all this for you. I said to myself, whatever danger there is, whatever happens I won't let Mary down. And then—you let me down. All the other fellows will be there with their loved ones about them. People will say 'Oo's this fellow? Lonely bachelor? Oh no, he's got a wife but she didn't care to come.' Didn't care to come! Think of it. Think of the disloyalty. Royal command it is practically. 'Yes, Your Majesty, I got a wife but she didn't care to come!'"

Mrs Tewler might have been listening to a dramatic rehearsal.

"You'll get over it, Teddy," she said, after his last poignant phrase. "You'd better let me pack your bag for you. I'll put up your shaving things, but you'd better get a shave in the hotel in the morning. You might cut yourself in your excitement. . . ."

So he went to London alone and indignant. The morning paper said that enemy activity over this country for the previous night had been inconsiderable. A few bombs had been dropped and there had been a certain destruction of house property and a casualty or so in one south coast town. Nothing much. But the house property in question was Homestead, and the chief casualties were Mary Tewler, one of her cats and the general servant next door. Mr Pildington of Johore had been blown off his feet and was suffering from contusions, and Caxton was badly damaged.

Mary Tewler recovered consciousness in the afternoon. She said she wanted to see her son. She did not know precisely where he was, but she thought his battalion was in Wales. She gave all the particulars.

"We'll trace him, my dear," said the sister in charge. "They do that sort of thing now wonderfully. "But—your husband, Mrs Tewler?"

"Not so urgent. Plenty of time for that. He's in London. He's being decorated by the King," she said. "Don't spoil it for him by upsetting him. There's plenty of time. It won't matter for a day or so. I just feel numb you know. And tired."

The sister in charge became a person of infinite delicacy.  
“ I think your husband ought to be told now.”

“ You mean I’m worse than I think ? ”

“ No need to deceive a brave woman like you. We’re doing all we can for you.”

Mary shut her eyes and thought. Then she spoke : “ Telegram ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ If I could see it——”

On these conditions she gave the name of the Palace Hotel at Victoria.

The telegram Edward Albert received informed him that his wife, very gravely injured by enemy action, was in Bright-hampton Emergency Hospital. Mary had proposed to omit “ very ”, but the request was tactfully forgotten.

“ Gaw ! ” said Edward Albert. “ It’s like a Judgment. If only she’d have listened to reason ! If only ! I tol her. . . . ”

Then for a time he sat quite still. “ Mary,” he whispered.

Something quivered within him, a deeper distress for which his habits of mind gave him no form of expression.

“ Maybe it’s not so bad.” One mustn’t give way to “ ideers ” in war time. “ They don’t take risks,” he reflected.

He sent his telegram after a meditative tea. “ Must be at Palace, special command of His Majesty, to-morrow as arranged. Will be with you before six. Teddy.”

But just before his supreme moment, that deeper stir within him, that undeveloped possibility of feeling, overwhelmed him again, and he sobbed. Of course she ought to have been here. He was astonished at his sob. . . .

At the hospital they told him Mary was dying, and even then the reality did not seem to be real.

“ Is she hurting ? ” he said.

“ She’s numb. Her body is paralysed.”

“ That’s good,” he said.

He found his son had preceded him at the hospital.

“ He wanted to sit with her to the end but I thought better not,” said the sister in charge. “ It’s an effort for her to speak. She’s troubled in her mind about something.”

"Has she been asking for me?"

"She wants to see you very much. She's asked three times."

That again distressed him inexpressibly. Somehow he ought to have been there.

"We had a sort of little difference," said Edward Albert, trying to put unspeakable things into words. "Nothing really—just a tiff you might say. I expect now she's sorry she didn't come and she wants to hear all about it." (Sob). "She must want to hear all about it. If only she'd come. . . ."

But that was not what was worrying Mary.

Their conversation was at cross-purposes.

"Promise me something," she said unheeded.

"It was wonderful, Mary," said Edward Albert. "Wonderful. Not a bit pompous. Not a bit high and mighty."

"He's your son."

"Royal *and* democratic. Marvellous."

"Don't let anyone set you against him, Teddy. Don't do that," said the fading voice.

He did not hear what she was saying, for the glorious story he had prepared filled his mind.

He expatiated on the approach to Buckingham Palace; the crowd; the polite way in which he was picked out and asked in; how there were fellows taking snapshots and some cheering.

"Promise me," she murmured. "Promise me." They were her last words.

"The King was there and the Queen. Naturally. Such a nice young unaffected feller. No crowns for him. And her with that sort of jollying smile of hers. Nothing stuck-up about her. Oh! I wish you could have been there and seen how different it was from what you supposed. It might have been a tea party rather than a court ceremony. And yet all the time a sort of dignity. You felt, here is something that will go on, the heart of a great empire like . . . All the time I was thinking of you and how I'd come back and tell you everything. But I wish you could have been there to see. Yes, yes. If you'd been there.

"I 'urried down to show it to you. And 'ere it is, Mary, 'ere it is. . . ."

For a few seconds she stared at her husband's evident self-satisfaction as though it was something strange to her, and then as steadfastly at the cross in his hand. She made no further effort to speak. Slowly her interest faded. She closed her eyes like a tired child. She closed them on him and on this clumsy stupid world for ever. . . .

Presently the sister put a hand on his arm.

"She was such a *wonderful* wife to me," said Edward Albert, sobbing freely. "What I shall do without her I don't know." Sob. "Oh! I reely don't know. I'm glad I was able to show her *this*. I *am* glad of that. . . . It ain't much. It's something; isn't it? . . . Something to show her. . . ."

The nurse let him have his cry out.

He found his son in a mood of lethargic misery in the corridor. He had travelled all night for a last glimpse of her. "She's gone, my boy," said Edward Albert. "Our Mary. I was just able to show it to her before she closed her eyes."

"Show *what* to her?" asked Henry.

Edward Albert held out the decoration.

"Oh, *that*," said Henry, and lapsed into himself again.

BOOK THE SIXTH  
GOD, SATAN AND HOMO TEWLER

CHAPTER I

*Tewler to sapiens*

THAT completes all that is essential in the life of Edward Albert Tewler, his Deeds and Significant Sayings. But before this specimen human being can be put definitively into its place, in space, in time, among the stars, and *Firis* written to this book, a few possibly exasperating comments have still to be made on the nature of the universe and the wisdom of the ages. The reader was warned of this in the penultimate paragraph of the Introduction (q.v.).

Certain types of *Homo Tewler*, functioning under the designations of philosophers, theologians, teachers and the like, are still regarded with an excessive awe and far too readily accepted at their own valuation by the great majority of our race. They are like business firms, competing among themselves for a monopoly, but agreed in selling God, Truth and Righteousness into the Tewler soul precisely as the proprietary medicine sellers sold their bottlefuls into Mrs Richard Tewler's body. Not too confidently. Most of them betray a doubt of their own reality by dressing up in strange apologetic garments, gowns, hoods, robes, the oddest tiaras, mitres, petticoats and the like, shaving their heads, growing vast unclean beards, as who should say, "I am peculiar. I am not a man but a divine medium."

I ask you ; a medium for what ?

For philosophy ? But can there be more than one single philosophy for sane humanity ? And can that philosophy be so outside the limits of the human understanding that it is necessary to dress up like a Gold Coast witch-doctor to expound that high' hokey-pokey ? Since poor rambling *Homo sub-sapiens* began to put facts together and ask questions about them, he has been accumulating a vast disorder of

answers, right, wrong and oblique. Mostly they are oblique. His so-called "thinkers" were overtaken either by death or a conviction of indisputable rightness, before they had thought anything out. The history of human thought is essentially a history of human error, of a midden that has never been thoroughly cleaned. Accumulation is the word for it. Never in all recorded time down to this last syllable, has that mass been submitted to an honest, sustained, digestive process. Its unassimilated chunks become "classics". The student of philosophy doing "Greats" or whatever pompous name is given to this stale resurrection pie, is introduced to a jumble of incompatible ideas, a mixture of bits from different jig-saw puzzles; incoherence as wisdom. Our story of Edward Albert has shown reason why we still wait for a comprehensive clean-up. The little beast by the million blocks the way. But that clean-up has to come, if the transition to *sapiens* is ever to be attained.

And as with philosophy, so with religion. Religion is the binding system of ideas and practices which holds a community together. Obviously then, a healthy community can have only one religion, and now that distance has been abolished and mankind has become an interdependent worldwide community, there can be only one religion in the world. There can be no "religious toleration" in a sane world community. Your community needs to be bound by a common understanding, and you cannot allow organisations of priestly kidnappers to attack the social solidarity because they have a Church to sell.

The religion a world community needs is a very simple one. It cannot hold together without a dogmatic assertion of the supreme duty of outspoken truth, of the common ownership of the earth and the equal rights of man. So long as people accept these fundamental dogmas, for dogmas they are, albeit vitally necessary dogmas, there is nothing to prevent folks elaborating whatever novel or antiquarian ceremonies or mythologies they have a mind for, or discussing in adult freedom any seditious ideas that occur to them. In a reasonably educated world, there would be no justification for

oppressing the private sessions of the Jewish Klaus or a Hell fire Club or adult baptism, or Hitler's astrologer or a celebration of the mass or a spiritualistic séance. So long as those who indulged in these oddities did not organise a propaganda of them and sell them to impair the general mental balance of the human community. But to tamper with the trustful minds of the young or the informative organisation of the world, is quite a different matter.

So we come to the problem of world teaching. This is plainly the most formidable problem ahead of us. For that old slattern, our Mother Nature, who has let one thing lead to another until we are now in a single world community, has neglected to give us any individual or collective drive for an education that will reconcile us to that conscious adaptation our situation demands. She has failed to mitigate our obstinate indisposition to learn. *Homo Tewler* may yet perish miserably *en masse* because of his fear of a plunge into reality. He holds on to his sinking ship ; he looks at the dark waters and runs back to lock himself in his mental cabin with the sedatives the clerical salesman has persuaded him to trust.

Yet time and again men of exceptional penetration have attempted to launch a recognition of universal brotherhood, of a new generosity and a co-operative life upon the world, as the only possible salvation for our species. It is not a new realisation. Now, indeed, it is finally urgent, but it has been plainly necessary to men of clear vision for scores of centuries. Nineteen centuries ago, Jesus of Nazareth, last, most indignant and most revolutionary of the Hebrew prophets, beating the money-changers and cursing the barren fig tree, was, so far as we can disinter his doctrine from subsequent accretions, preaching the gospel of human solidarity as his "Kingdom of Heaven", and the socialist movement, before Marx undermined it, was an equally disinterested drive towards a sane salvation of our Tewler world.

There is much to be learnt about the psychology of the animal we are, from the fate of these two initiatives. They were caught and crippled and destroyed by the sub-conscious malice of their first generation of disciples. Paul took posses-

sion of Jesus and smothered him in doctrinal Christianity, and in a little while that noble beginning had sunken to the wrangling of the "Fathers". It was not the Galilean who triumphed over the pagan stoicism of Julian. It was Paul who conquered. It was the fundamental Tewlerism of mankind that asserted itself against a precocious stirring of *Homo sapiens*. In the same way Marx imposed an orthodoxy upon the socialist impulse, and infected it with his own conceit, jealousy and arrogance.

*Corruptio optima, pessima.* To-day the most evil thing in the whole world is the Roman Catholic Church, whose shameless symbol is Jesus the Son of Man, drooping, crucified and done for. Wherever the Catholic priest prevails, among the decadent pious French generals of the surrender, in Croatia, in Japan, in Spain, in that spite-slum, Eire, in Italy, in South America, in Australia, there you find malicious mischief afoot against the enlightenment of mankind. People have called Catholicism a cancer of the human mind. But it is no such neoplasm ; it is congenital ; it is the organised front of that base heritage of the Tewlers, from which we are seeking escape. It had no revelation ; to claim a revelation is priestly impudence ; it is the most natural religion possible, mean and muddle-witted, human to the dregs, pretending to be divine.

The Communist Party is the identical twin of Catholicism. It is its little left brother, psychologically the same. Inevitably the two work together for the same general frustration of human hope. They gratify the same resentful craving of the inferiority complex that we have traced throughout the life of our particular specimen. They are the same sort of animal as he. Never shall life be better than *my* life ! they insist.

In view of these two great betrayals, we may reasonably doubt the possibility of a world-wide common education that will raise and keep *Homo Tewler* above himself. Whatever a few far-seeing people may attempt, it will surely be undermined and defeated by those who will come in and be brought into the great work. "You can't expect humanity to pull itself up by its own shoe-straps," tee-hees Mr Chamble Pewter triumphantly. "Forgive my sense of humour."

But obstinate rebels exist who will not accept that. They argue, for instance, that already there has been at least one drive in this Tewler world, the onset of what it is customary nowadays to call Science with a capital S, which has so far evaded priestcraft or any sort of authoritarian suffocation. This Science has revolutionised the material conditions of human life, and it behoves us to examine how it sprang up and what exactly it is. No miracle begot it. It had no Founder. It began in a natural Adlerian revolt against the overbearing religious dogmatisms of the Middle Ages. Against their exasperating self-confidence, the recalcitrants, unable to take it meekly any longer, and casting about for some means of self-assertion, discovered to their delight certain incompatibilities between the teaching and facts, and summoned a new arbitrator, experimental verification, to justify their revolt.

It is absurd to ennable the driving force of that new movement. We cannot afford to sentimentalise Science: Roger Bacon, so far as our knowledge of him goes, never said, "I love truth," or "What noble thing can I do for my fellow-men?" or in a state of pious helpfulness, "Let me discover something for the greater glory of God." He did nothing of the sort; and anyhow the essential thing about him was something quite different; he lost his temper. He endured the philosophical assurance about him as long as he could, and then flung himself at a weak point, abusively and violently, and made the most of it. There was really no essential difference between the motives of Roger Bacon when he put out his tongue at the medieval Aristotle and young Master Edward Albert Tewler when he put out his tongue at the serene self-satisfaction of the lion in the Zoo.

Galileo again, was no visitant from a higher sphere; he was as human as any of us. But the complacent finality of the Church about everything in heaven and earth was too much for him. He published his forbidden book to make those who were set in authority over him realise just what damned fools they were. He could not keep quiet. They argued with him, they made him recant and keep a civil tongue in his head, but they knew and he knew that they knew. "All the same,

it moves," he jeered at their dignified efforts to nail the earth down again, the earth that Copernicus and he had dislodged and sent spinning off round the sun for ever.

It is very important for our purpose here to recall this essential resentful Tewlerism of the scientific initiative, because then we can realise that great truths can and do emerge and increase without the agency of great minds, exalted discoverers or the like. Through a quite ignoble recalcitrance. It was Tewler insubordinate against Tewler in authority. Scientific progress oozes out of the general substance of Tewlerism, and its outstanding personalities, so liable to deification, are a hindrance rather than a help.

But this does not explain why these new expansions of the human outlook were not presently seized upon and exploited and betrayed by some creed-maker like St Paul, followed up by the usually inevitable priesthood. For that we must account in some other way. It is not so very difficult to do that. Science began *differently*. It began less as a public teaching than as a hobby. And it did not invade more than a limited part of the field of modern life and thought, and that was a part of the field remote from the primordial scuffle for pride and power. It began completely out of politics, and it raised no objections to current religious and social life. The Royal Society, like the Academia dei Lincei, was a society of gentlemen amateurs who met unobtrusively and exchanged their sceptical observations, their entertaining *Centuries of Inventions* and so forth, and published their *Philosophical Transactions* more or less privately. In those days they did not use the word "Science". It was Natural Philosophy and Natural History they talked about.

The Royal Society was a toy for Charles II, and it was only as the nineteenth century unfolded that mankind realised that this pet tiger cub was growing into a rather formidable monster. It stuck its claws through the gaiters of Bishop Wilberforce with great effect, when he launched a Tewleresque kick at it. It was that memorable encounter of "Soapy Sam" and Grandfather Huxley at the British Association meeting which made the "Conflict of Religion and Science" a

burning issue. Then it was that the great vested interest of Anglicanism, which, in spite of the resistances of nonconformity and dissent, had been selling the Hanoverian Church-and-State system to the variegated population of the British Empire very successfully, took alarm, and the competing nostrum-sellers of Roman Catholicism and the Bible-reading sects, made common cause with it. This young tiger was biting mouthfuls out of the Creator ! A Creator was an integral asset in their common equipment ; they could not have him eroded and damaged ; they could not do without him.

It is plausible to liken Science to a young tiger in this way, but that comparison needs to be qualified. Science may claw or bite upon occasion, but essentially it is the product of a protean anonymous power, and if in certain circumstances it took on the appearance of a dangerous assailant, it eluded any definitive suppression by its extraordinary lack of centralised organisation. It had no head to strike off, no sanctum to burn. There were no consolidated funds to be seized. It arose from the world-wide natural recalcitrance of the human mind. It was here. It was there. Like a dawn. And wherever it spread, the critical spirit in man was stimulated and encouraged to further insubordination.

So the struggle against Science is not so much an attempt to uproot and end something tangible and uprootable, as a world-wide disposition on the part of the great vested interests that overshadow our lives and sell us God, government and war to-day, to prevent an undesired and unexpected illumination reaching the general mass of mankind.

In this they have succeeded to a disconcerting extent. You have been told how a sample young Englishman, fifty years after Darwin, could dispose of his relationship to *Tarsius* and the apes with an oafish guffaw, still believing that he and all things were made, as one might mould clay, by a personal God rather resembling Mr Myame but with a whiter and woollier beard, a little muddled in his identity with an extremely mawkish Saviour who was also his Son, a phosphorescent pigeon intervening. ("Mystery of the Holy Trinity," comes an echo from Edward Albert. "'Ands off

sacred things ! 'Oly ! 'Oly ! 'Oly ! People won't tol'rate you saying things like that, and if God was anything like what he used to be, you'd be struck dead for it *instanter.*")

Which belated outbreak of Edward Albert's is exactly why I write with ruthless precision here. The words I have used describe Christian doctrine unconventionally but exactly as it is presented by the Church and Christian art. If my phrases shock the reader, that only shows it is high time he or she was shocked. The doctrine of the Trinity is, I repeat, atrocious nonsense. Yet all over the English-speaking world, children's minds are still being paralysed by the injection of this same atrocious nonsense. You can hear the bland voices of the parsons in the British Broadcasting Corporation's Children's Hour, telling the old Bible stories as truth, telling of real angels and real miracles, of resurrections and marvels of the utmost absurdity, lying deliberately to earn their livings.

" You talk like the Village Atheist," protests Bishop Tewler, being as upper-class and socially subtle as he knows how. " All that, we understand quite as well as you do, is just a series of time-honoured stories, dear bewtiful old symbols." The village atheist was often the salt of the village, and I am proud to rank with him. I had rather jest with him at the public house than dine at the Bishop's Palace and be lubricated. Have the common people been told that these tales are just symbols ? And what do they understand them to symbolise ?

When we think of readapting mankind to a world of unity and co-opération, we have to consider that practically all the educational machinery on earth, is still in the hands of God-selling or Marx-selling combines. Everywhere in close co-operation with our nationalist governments, the oil and steel interests, our drug salesmanship and so forth, the hirelings of these huge religious concerns, *with more or less zeal and loyalty*, are selling destruction to mankind.

To those italics I will return after a paragraph or so.

Plainly if the mind of the world needs urgently to be reconditioned, this is on the face of it a very dismaying state of affairs. And it is not even a practicable suggestion merely

to utter the magic word "Science". Is it really Science we have in mind when we think of a reorganised and mentally reconditioned world? Or are we taking the advancement of Science merely as the sample of the process of sustained free rationalisation, a process capable of a much wider extension to human affairs in general?

Science, as we know it now, gathers prestige as its scope extends, and as the need for experimental teamwork and rapid interchanges increases, it seems to be losing much of its early immunity from interference and perversion. It does not hold power but it creates it now in enormous volume. It has completely revolutionised war, but it has not abolished it. A hundred years ago scientific research was still mainly a free private activity and science could get along as that. Now it cannot do so. Now it is open and exposed and continually more vulnerable, and every salesman in the world is trying to attach it and profit by it. But he still finds a difficulty in its essentially protean quality.

The attitude of militant Germany to Science is peculiarly interesting. The bulk of the German people has been disciplined to acquiescence for centuries. That rebellious factor which breaks out in new discoveries and creative inventions has been well nigh drilled out of them. On the other hand, as part of their disposition to subservience, they have a greater respect for scientific achievement than any other people, with the possible exception of the new Russians. They want to capture it and make it their own. So that they will follow up and do more with suggestions and leading ideas that come to them from abroad than almost any other people. The theory of National Socialism, and especially its intense racialism, is pseudo-scientific. *Homo Tewler var. Germanicus* is far less hostile on principle to knowledge and new ideas than are the pluto-Christian-democracies.

The group of adventurers, bored by inferiority, who, with such remarkable success, have been selling the world death by unending totalitarian war, and incidentally having a glorious time, have no use for the religious appeal. They find it a dead appeal. They get better results by producing pseudo-

scientific generalisations. Relativity is taboo in Germany, possibly because Hess and Hitler, the joint authors of *Mein Kampf*, were unfitted to understand it, and so were embittered by it, but mainly because its main exponent was a Jew. It was, they declared, not "Nordic". And in the place of it we were presented with genuine "Nordic" physics. In Hess-Hitler-land Nordic archæology, Nordic biology and so forth are replacing real archæology, real biology, etc. In Russia the left priesthood of Communism is attempting a similar strangulation of intellectual life by selling cheap substitutes. Prolet-art, we hear of, and Proletarian chemistry. And a biological worker finds himself driven into exile, to avoid a harsher fate, because "Darwinism" is represented as infringing in some way upon that sacred mystery, the dictatorship of the proletariat.

So far from extending itself into the realms of government and general creative direction, Science as such may be already shrinking back into a subservient position. The continuance of the present scientific process is by no means secure from without or from within. We have seen it assailed and appropriated from without. Within, the specialist, with the mentality of a Greek slave, develops an increasing hostility to the irritating, autocratic-spirited outsider who exasperates him by the broader sweep of his views. He will extinguish him if he can. He will block his interrogative intervention in research organisation. He will take refuge under the wing of authority. The doors of the Royal Society in the days when it was dominated by free-thinking, free-speaking gentlemen have stood open to disturbing ideas, but with the increase in specialisation, there is an increasing disposition for the new sort of scientific worker to appropriate and canalise for his own satisfaction the prestige accumulated by the old.

Plainly Science as we know it and so far as it is represented by societies, endowments, chairs, honours, titles, museum collections and the like, can be subjugated and replaced by a parody of itself, and it holds out little promise in itself of fresh and vigorous initiatives in the present human riddle. But the question takes on an entirely different complexion

if it is realised that, as I have already been hinting, what we call Science, with its bundle of "ologies", is merely the first harvest of a much wider system of mental motivations which still remains protean, elusive, in the face of systematic opposition, and capable now of rapid destructive processes among our staggering and obsolescent institutions, destruction that will in itself lay bare the broader realities upon which alone world reconstruction can be based. Or to put it in other phrases, there is reason to hope that that same proteus of insubordination which liberated Science, may give us—not a further extension of Science and fresh "ologies", but something greater, a kindred thing, para-science, the next stage of human liberation, world understanding and world revolution, the dawn of *sapiens*.

This new thrust of the rebellious proteus may be expected to seek and find its own implements and methods in the replacement of the world muddle of *Homo Tewler* by the awakening will of *sapiens*. One thing towards which it is moving even now is the renascence of law upon a world scale. Like medical practice, the legal organisation has been corrupted by the protective professionalism of the old order of things, yet law, even bad, old-fashioned law, rigidly enforced, is an instrument for liberty. The man under law is a man protected from arbitrary violence; he knows clearly beforehand what he may do and what he may not do, and the advance of freedom wherever it has existed in the world has gone on concurrently with the declaration and maintenance of rights. Even our Edward Albert and his Evangeline struggled to express something they called their "rights" of the case, and it is a hopeful augury of revolution that there should be even now a formulated Declaration of Rights approved of by a growing number of intelligent and resentful people, and resisted, actively or passively, by every existing government on earth. For governing gangs and classes everywhere know what that Declaration means for them. It offers a fundamental law for a united and recivilised world, into which their pomps and pretensions will be dissolved, and as the old order of things becomes more and more plainly an intolerable-

confusion of enslavement and frustration, it will be the sole means of uniting and implementing a thousand storms of resentment.

What possible rival can it have? Fraudulent imitations and falsifications may help the diffusion of its suggestions rather than hinder its establishment. Given only a few desperate men, sick with disgust at the tediums and pretences of the Tewler life, and bored to fury by the vistas of aimless, incessant and finally suicidal bloodshed ahead of them, in which they personally can expect no gratification, and there is no reason now why they by the measure of any previous human experience should not put a new face upon reality very rapidly indeed. They need not be idealists nor devotees nor anything of that sort. If they belong to the school of Mr F.'s aunt in *David Copperfield*, it is enough. "I hate a fool," said the old lady.

The collaboration of these exasperated men will find infinitely more powerful means of ousting old ideas by new ones than any previous revolutionaries. The Acts of the Apostles were vocal, pedestrian and storm-tossed, and Christianity seeped and changed about the Roman world through a long and confusing adolescence and was one thing here and another there; it took centuries to penetrate the countryside (*pagani*) or reach the frontiers; even the Marxist propaganda was an affair of books, periodicals, smuggled leaflets, slogans, small lecturing nuclei; but modern mechanism now, as it has developed in the last third of a century, gives all that is needed for a simultaneous diffusion of the same essential ideas and the immediate correction of differences, from end to end of the earth. Even an opposition suggestion spreads at lightning speed, as the German propaganda shows, and quite a small number of men in earnest and in unison could wrench the whole world into acquiescence with a unifying fundamental law.

And when we think of reconditioning the mind of mankind, we need not be dismayed by a vision of ill-lit stuffy class-rooms and millions of half-trained teachers struggling with blackboard and tattered text-book to "teach" scores of millions of children. In a world of plenty all that will be

different, and modern apparatus—radio, screen, gramophone and the like—affords the possibility of an enormous economy of teaching ability. One skilful teacher or demonstrator can teach from pole to pole, just as Toscanini can conduct Brahms for all the world to hear, and at the same time go on record for our children's children. All this "canned teaching" will provoke Mr Chamble Pewter's rich sense of humour. I doubt if that will deter those angry rebels who have got their hands upon the levers, and are determined to let the children see and hear and know and hope. Not in any mood of love or that sort of thing, but because they hate the pomp and glories of incapable authority.

And hard upon the revolt in teaching and the sweeping-away of the irritating private localised and nationalised controls of universal interests, may come the establishment of a great framework of ordered and recorded knowledge throughout the world. At present such encyclopædias as our world possesses are in the hands of unscrupulous salesmen, they are a century and a half antiquated and blinkered in outlook, but the facilities afforded by microphotography, modern methods of multiplication, modern methods of documentation, open up the clear possibility of putting all the knowledge in the world, brought right up to date, within easy reach of every man everywhere on earth, within a couple of days. That is no fantastic dream; it is a plain and calculable enterprise now to throw that net of living consciousness over all our planet. (Here in the most untimely fashion Edward Albert Tewler intervenes with raucous screams of "Bawls! I tell you. Bawls.") Once the new plant has struck root it will be very difficult to beat it down again. It will give far more satisfaction to the elementary needs of *Homo Tewler* than the old stuff, which was not only inadequate and frustrating but humiliating. It will be like horse-radish, which grows again from any torn shred wherever it has once been grown.

It may be that we want a new word for a system of knowledge-distribution that aims only to inform and put everything that is known within the reach of every individual man. Mr H. D. Jennings White would sweep away the word "educa-

tion" altogether, as a tainted word, and have us talk of *Eutrophy*, good nourishment of body and mind, and then let free men decide. A Eutrophic world from which priest and pedagogue have been swept as unnecessary evils is quite within the range of human possibility.

Moreover, when we canvass the possibilities of a break towards the light and "*sapiens*", there is another important factor in the process of mental liberation that must be brought into our accounting, and that is revolt from within. These Tewler priesthoods, the more they dominate, the more they must awaken the spirit of insubordination in those whose rôle is mainly acquiescence.

The Catholic priesthood has never sat lightly and easily upon the lives of common men, and wherever the level of education has risen to a general elementary literacy, there has been revolt. Catholicism has produced the bloodiest revolts in history. Wherever the Catholic Church has been in complete control of education, the final outcome has been a revolution at once bloodthirsty and blasphemous. The lands have risen in a state of infuriated ingratitude to hunt priests and desecrate and burn churches. Mrs Nesta Webster ascribes this to the direct activity of Satan, and possibly she is right. Perhaps he does not exert himself so much in Protestant and Pagan countries because they can be considered damned already. But this reaction has been so invariable in the past, it has occurred in so many countries, that it seems for instance a fairly safe bet that in quite a short time the faithful in Ireland, bored to death by a too intimate control of their minds, their morals and their economic life, may be shooting their priests exactly as they used to shoot their landlords, and through practically the same wholesome exasperation of their inferiority complex.

But it seems probable that this lack of submissiveness is not peculiar to the flock. The shepherds also must feel the stirring of Satan in their souls. Much of this is hidden from the enquiring outsider. What his fellow-cardinals think of the encyclicals of the current Pope, for instance, is wrapped in the darkness of their discretion, but up and down the body

of the Church there is and always has been a certain restiveness, and in this time of universal mental stress there is likely to be more. The chief critical attacks that have strained and broken the solidarity of the Great Imposition in the past have come from Churchmen.

Even in the days before Constantine the Great, when a definite Credo became a plain necessity to substantiate the bargain between Church and State, Christian controversy was chiefly internecine. There was no definite arraignment of the new teaching from any of the philosophical teachers of the schools of Alexandria or the University of Athens, in spite of the provocative snarls of such Christians as Tertullian. They did not think that there was anything in Christianity worthy of argument. Down the ages the typical source of trouble has been the undistinguished man within the Church reading the Scriptures and irritated by the assumptions and interferences of his superiors. He made trouble because he wanted to make trouble. And to-day now more than ever a collapse behind this formidable façade of Catholicism is possible. The Church may feel a chill of doubt about the future and take to professing liberal and democratic ideals, and that may liberate a number of smouldering recalcitrants grimly determined to make their ecclesiastical superiors mean what they say.

Another thing that may weaken this still arrogant opposition to any release of *sapiens* may be a great social and monetary storm that will wash away its financial foundations. Priests out of work can forget their sacred calling and authority with remarkable rapidity. They are, as a class, soft-handed and sedentary, and it is possible that many of the younger ones may be interested and reconditioned for educational work. Throughout the social fabric the work of the essential revolution is not a simple implacable conflict but rather a miscellaneous release and reorientation.

We are dealing here with a number of factors whose force and relative importance are practically incalculable. From them there may or may not emerge a federated world, a common fundamental law, an economically unified planet,

an organised and properly implemented world education. But until *Homo Tewler* has got thus far in the balance and control of his incoherent resistances and egotisms, it is preposterous, it is ridiculous, to call him *Homo sapiens*. That is simply flattering a disagreeable and suicidally backward animal to its own extermination.

## CHAPTER 2

### *Philosophical-Theological*

AND now for a philosophical-theological interlude. Some sort of promise was made in the Introduction to avoid "Ideers". In spirit, if not to the letter, this promise has been kept. I have done my best to keep to simple, straightforward description, but one thing has led to another; it was less and less possible to keep the background out of the picture if the story was to remain permanently comprehensible. And even at this point there still remain issues that have been raised without deliberate malice, but which must be dealt with, if this account is to be really complete.

But be it noted that from first to last my method has been descriptive. Not one single "Ideer" of my own has been thrust upon the reader. He has not been put upon. I have observed. I have recorded. Simply.

In the preceding chapter, for example, as part of that description, the declaration comes out simply and necessarily that there can be only one philosophy and only one religion in a civilised world order. There may be readers who will be disposed to regard this as an opinion rather than a statement of fact. They will murmur such names as Hegel, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, William James, Bergson, Maritain, Santayana, Croce, Pavlov, Russell, the Behaviourists and so forth and so on. They will wave towards a vast literature of commentary, over-elaboration, misrepresentation and the like. But if they will come and stand a little aloof in an attitude of entirely disrespectful attention, they will begin to realise how much of this cerebration is as superfluous as the

caps, gowns, titles, ceremonies and pretensions with which it is associated. Let us blow away what we can of this almost overwhelming froth and see whether there really is at bottom more than one philosophical reality for the purposes and within the limitations of *Homo sapiens*.

People who, like Edward Albert, have grown up in an atmosphere of unqualified partisan monotheism in which God is, so to speak, everything, originating and sustaining everything and accounting for everything, have scarcely a suspicion of the immense unsoundness of this assumption. It is not even justified by Holy Scripture. Therein it is plainly admitted that the whole religious process arose out of a dual system, like the Zoroastrian antagonism of Ormazd and his twin brother and undying opponent, Ahriman. Satan confronts God at the outset of the Jewish-Christian story, and has his way with Man, Eden is lost and God's goodness is defeated. God is exasperated and takes it out of Man. Read your Bible. Only gradually does the story weaken down to a predestinate servitude to an invincible Deity. Islam, Judaism, Christianity, are all, so to speak, apostate dualisms that have taken sides and declared outright for one Supreme Being, and a very large part of the philosophical turmoil of the past two hundred years has been a confused return first to an essential and incurable dualism and then, going further, to a polytheistic universe, after the long predominance of one unlimited God.

Yet from the formulation of the so-called Apostles' Creed onward, there have been signs of an uneasiness about the soundness of this assertion of omnipotence, betrayals of a feeling on the part of the faithful that perhaps they were professing just a little too much. Throughout the centuries the Church has never desisted completely from explaining the Almighty, just as Stalin for the past score of years has never completely desisted from explaining the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. And for quite parallel reasons any denial of the Dictatorship of God in Christendom or the Dictatorship of the Proletariat in Russia has been discouraged as strenuously as possible—all the more strenuously because they are fundamentally unsound dogmas and cannot stand examination.

Directly the dispassionate student of theology sets out to rescue the idea of God from the partisan extravagances of the pious, it becomes manifest that the idea of His omniscience, omnipresence and omnipotence must be abandoned. These terms are entirely incompatible with the idea of a personal God with whom anyone or anything can have a relationship in time and space. A God who knows everything must be entirely stagnant mentally. How can he think, since everything is there in his mind already? And if he fills all space, then he is fixed for ever. How can he move? He cannot think; he has thought it all; he cannot move; he is there already. And since he is incapable of mental or physical change, then so far from being omnipotent he is powerless, he is fixed rigidly in an everlasting strait-jacket. Theology can only become a science of Godship when it abandons these preposterous absolutes.

But having abandoned these absolutes, the fresh-minded theologian can go on to some very entertaining considerations. According to any intelligent theological teaching, God, in some manner altogether mysterious and incomprehensible, came into Being in time and space, and our universe began. That is beyond understanding. He had withdrawn himself from an inconceivable infinitude in order to have relationships with creatures outside himself. He opened proceedings by saying: "Let there be light." And having manifested himself by light, in that moment he must have cast a shadow, coterminous and reciprocal to himself, the anti-God, Satan, his Zoroastrian twin. Before ever he began to knead the red earth into Adam, the opponent was beside him ready to wreck the work. How else could it have been?

Upon this idea Nietzsche seized, and presented the world with a modern version of the Zoroastrian. (He found it more picturesque and impressive to call it in "Old Persian" the the "Zarathustrian" idea.) A lot he knew of Old Persian! Literary artistry, erudition, classical pretentiousness, and a dislike for Jews gave his writing its peculiar qualities. He swallowed Persian dualism uncritically and took the side of Satan, because it was the most emphatic way of repudiating

the orthodoxies and ungentlemanly beliefs about him. He drew his contrast. God wanted to keep man a naked respectful slave in the Garden of Eden, amidst a great boredom of carnivores and suchlike frustrated creatures. Satan wanted to get him to eat the tree of knowledge and go out into the great world. Eden meant "Safety First"; Satan whispered "Live dangerously". That was one current of revolt. It was not very original. It followed the drift of the period. There is indeed about one week of clear hard thinking in the whole of the Nietzschean bubble. After that he just blew and blew.

Years before him, Hegel had been developing a philosophy that had a close relationship to that same necessary association of light and shadow. After the manner of philosophers, he exaggerated and universalised his bright idea until he saw the whole universe as a system of copulating contrasts. If a definite thing exists, said he, its opposite exists and struggles to replace it, and out of the conflict comes a synthesis. He spent an industrious life, like Og, King of Bashan, fitting everything to his universal formula.

Schopenhauer, in the same spirit of laborious revolt against established values that had become intolerable to him, insisted that the one thing stirring under the fabric of appearances was Will; the Will to live or the Will for Nirvana. He spun the web of this thread of thought to impressive dimensions, and it lived on in Shaw's Life Force, Bergson's *Elan Vital* and the sustaining spirits of Thomas Hardy. But elsewhere hardly at all.

The revolt of the modern mind against the idea of a professedly benevolent divine autocrat responsible for its infinite confusion, has now gone much further than that sort of thing. William James put up a case for polytheism, and Pavlov and the Behaviourists produced excellent reasons why we should regard the individual man as no more than a still very incompletely assembled bundle of conditioned reflexes.

None of this multitude of thinkers and their satellites brought his thoughts into really conclusive contact with the others. To do so would have been to discover much practical identity and so lose distinction. After their fashion, each

bombinated abundantly with only the slightest regard to other combinators. We cannot be too disrespectful at their stupendous, fussy and often quite disingenuous voluminousness. We who are looking on can perceive that the common effect of this tidal flow is to strip off any conceptions of good or evil from our interpretation of the world. Philosophical synthesis is mainly a process of cancellation and denudation. The net result of the philosophical-theological activities of mankind up to date has been almost entirely destructive ; it has been a cleansing and not an accumulation ; it has swept away a vast amount of interpretations and imperatives from life, and left it bare for us to do what we like with.

That freedom is the one universal philosophy to which the world is evidently coming. As I have said in the previous chapter, a gathering number of people, stirred by a great variety of motives, are resolved upon a world revolution and a new ordering of the world that will save *Homo Tewler* from putting an end to himself and carry him on to *Homo sapiens*. But they do that wilfully and dogmatically. And there is no absolute imperative to prevent anyone having a hate of them, deciding to be Satanic to them and opposing them openly or betraying them secretly. You can easily persuade yourself that you prefer destruction and death to life. Many people do nowadays. The thought of happier generations fills you with malicious envy. It may please you to do what you can to destroy not simply human hope but the whole race. It may gratify your craving for power to think you are doing that.

But then it will be will against will. Possibly you may win. But if you lose and the world revolution gets the upper hand of you, there is nothing to prevent it declaring you, quite dogmatically, a criminal or a lunatic. It may try to alter you if that can be arranged. It may have to kill you. Some killing may be absolutely necessary if there are too many implacables. A rationalised world cannot turn sane good men into warders and asylum attendants for the implacable. Or you may come over to us, for, like yourself, the revolutionaries will be *Tewler*, and you must be stirred by fluctuations and concentrations of motive, closely similar to theirs.

They are in no way superior to yourself, only they have had the luck to catch the light and crystallise about a comprehensive, unifying, infectious system of new ideas, sooner than you have done.

### CHAPTER 3

#### *Tewler as Ever*

EDWARD ALBERT TEWLER is still alive. I am afraid he at least is lost to the revolution. I have told his poor sordid story and that of the people whose lives he helped to spoil ; I have mocked at his absurdities and misfortunes and invincible conceit ; but all the way along as I wrote it something has protested, " This is not fair. Given a broader education, given air, light and opportunity, would he have been anything like this ? "

He is what our civilisation made of him, and this is all it made of him. I have told the complete truth about a contemporary specimen man. This brings me into conflict with my most intimate and trusted critic and with my loyal but anxious publishers. Your hero is detestable, they protest, and there is not really a nice human being in the book. Couldn't you put in some flash of real nobility in him, and can't you redeem the spectacle by one or two *good* people, essentially good people, behaving in an exemplary manner, people your readers would like and with whom they could identify themselves and so hold themselves aloof from the harsh veracity of your story ? That is exactly what I refuse to do for them. My case is that Edward Albert is not so much detestable as pitiful, and that for the rest I like nearly all my characters as they are—except Mr Chamble Pewter, whom manifestly I loathe. To love without illusions is to be secure against surprise. It is the quintessence of love. I follow in the tradition of Hogarth and Tom Jones and not in the footsteps of Richardson, and I shall count myself wholly damned if I let my friendly advisers induce me to pander to these people for whom reading is nothing better than material for Grandisonian reverie. How can there be

any "gleams of nobility" in a darkened and ever-darkening world? What light is there to reflect? What I have to say to every reader without exception is this: "This means you. You are Tewler. Search your memories sedulously, humble yourself before the truth. You are Tewler and I am Tewler. You and I in this book are not getting together and nudging each other gleefully at the blunders and baseness of a lot of inferior people. They are part of us, they are one body with us, and what they are we are. We perish with them. I am trying to tell you the most hopeful thing in our world and that is that out of our warring spites and meannesses there is the bare possibility of a wilful change in our atmosphere that will revolutionise human life. There is a way out and up, but only a fellowship of resentment and disillusionment can lead to that. We can make no terms with falsehood. Mankind has to be debunked. When Man realises his littleness, his greatness can appear. But not before. The priests, the scribes and pharisees, propitiatory Pilate and compromising Judas, will fight to the last against that release of Cosmopolis and the great brotherhood of *sapiens* that will ensue."

How long are we unawakened Cosmopolitans to go on wasting one another and devastating the future? What of the next generation that is straggling about in an evasive world that still lacks the wit to achieve peace? Young Henry—I meant not to tell you—is in jail, and his father has disowned him. He was involved in a labour riot, and he may or may not have been party to the killing of a man. His trial was brief and farcical. He may be young enough to save when the great jail delivery of the world revolution comes, but that will have to be soon for him to profit by it.

Edward Albert married again late last year. Something of the sort was inevitable. He met a widowed lady of independent means in a hydropathic establishment which has reopened in the Peak District. A certain flirtatiousness, small attentions, agreement in casual observations, awakened a mutual interest. They drifted together and kept together like two bits of wood on a stream. They looked for each other at breakfast-time and after dinner they were not

divided. They sat out on the terrace for a long time in silence side by side in the moonlight, and broke into autobiographical reminiscence. They realised they were both creatures of circumstances. "Life," said Edward Albert, "is one of the most 'strordinary things there is. There's nothing else quite like it." ("Nothing," agreed the lady.) "Who could have told, you and me would be sitting here like this three weeks ago? It's just as if it '*ad* to be. . . ."

After that, mutuality developed at a headlong pace. They discovered that they were both dreadfully lonely, that they had reciprocal needs, and that one household halves the expense of two.

So they married and snuggled up for mutual comfort and reassurance, and because the price of everything was going up and up. She was a warm embracing woman and a great comfort to Edward Albert. His digestion improved and he ceased to brood on cemeteries and epitaphs.

This marriage widened the breach between father and son. The boy objected to calling the new Mrs Tewler "mother", and seemed lacking in appreciation of her very generous and abundant blandishments. When she attempted to kiss him, he ducked and hurt her lip with his forehead.

When he got his discharge from the army he stayed only a few weeks at home, devouring books from the public library—he was a glutton for reading—and talking as little as possible to his father and step-mother. "You can't say a word to him without his flying out at you," Edward Albert complained. "I don't know what's come over the boy. Nothing's right for him." It was to their mutual relief that Henry proclaimed his intention of going to South Wales.

Edward Albert displayed parental solicitude that was ill requited. "'Ave you thought out where you're going and what you're going to do?' he asked. "You can't be too careful, my boy."

"I'm going to work there."

"And *what* work?"

"You wouldn't understand."

Pretty thing for a son to say to his father!

Then came the dreadful news that them Agitators had got hold of him, and then the tragedy.

It made Edward Albert very unhappy. Constantly he would recur to it.

"What did I ever do that the boy should turn against me? Him and Mary, they seemed to lock their 'earts against me. Mary too. . . . Locked 'earts."

"There's a sort of bitterness in him about you. I wonder sometimes if it isn't jealousy of that George's Cross of yours."

"I don't like to think that of 'Enery," considered Edward Albert. "I reely don't. Even now. Couldn't 'e feel pride in his own father? No. 'E's not so bad as that. It's these ideers he has, right-down wrong ideers. It's a sort of disease. I remember a talk I had with him when he thought he might be sent to France to put down them syndicalists. I warned him then.

"That was before you came along, my lady. I remember it as though it was yesterday. My 'ealth wasn't too good, the posts were all anyhow because of the general strike, and it looked as though he might not find his father when he came back. These ideers of his I told him were all wrong, but I didn't know then where they would lead him. It's been 'ard to see the way 'e's gone and 'arder still to do my duty by King and Country against my own son. Maybe I let Mary spoil 'im and make too much of him. She had a sort of—well, foolishness, for him. I often said she loved him more than she did me. Often."

Mrs Tewler III shook her head in agreement and said no more for the time being. She was very punctilious never to say a word, not a single word, against Mary. . . .

#### CHAPTER 4

##### *Flying Sparks*

AND now that I am speaking of this widening estrangement of the Tewlers, father and son, I may perhaps go still further beyond the austere limitations I set myself at the

beginning and bring the record of several other characters who have figured in this story up-to-date.

You may perhaps want to know about Evangeline Birkenhead who went off with all her belongings in a taxi-cab so precipitately out of this story in Book III, Chapter 19. She jumped out of Edward Albert's life like a woman who finds herself in the wrong train. She became a respondent, a decree *nisi*, a decree absolute and that was the end of her for him.

She did have a lover in her mind when she deserted Edward Albert. She was not boasting to Mrs Butter. Her lover was the managing director of the firm of glovers for whom she worked. He was a kindly middle-aged man who had been fascinated by her animation. His first wife had not made him very happy. She was a cold, religious woman, and a short-lived escapade on his part in another direction enabled her to half-divorce him. Only half, because after the decree *nisi* she was converted to Roman Catholicism and refused to have the decree made absolute, leaving him debarred from any other marriage. So in a state of considerable repression he conceived a very real passion for the bright young Evangeline. He imagined such intelligence into her that almost he evoked it.

He felt too mature and responsible towards her to seduce her, but he showered a devotion upon her that at once delighted and tantalised her. Once or twice they kissed, but he disciplined himself to a sentimental restraint which blinded him to the fact that in a year or so she had grown up very completely. He promoted her to a responsible position in the firm and contrived her trip to Paris to please her. He suffered acutely from her marriage, and, when she sought him out again, he succumbed very readily to her proposals, reinstated her in the business and lived with her as his wife, in a world which is less and less disposed to demand a sight of your marriage lines.

She became extremely philoprogenitive. She was interested in children; she wanted them. I suppose it was part of her acute sense of children that made her repudiate our

unfortunate Henry. She wasn't going to have a thing made after the fashion of Edward Albert thrust upon her. She resisted every momentary impulse to regard Henry as more than a premature and misbegotten little cuckoo. On the other hand, she elevated Mr Grigson to the highest honours among possible sires. She almost believed the glowing imaginations she wrapped about him. Millie Chaser had to listen at times to revelations about that quiet-seeming, civil-spoken gentleman that threw a languid pallor over the dalliance of Psyche with Cupid. At any rate, the children were healthy, active and good-looking, and Evangeline made, as people say, a remarkably good mother. She had a quick eye for temperatures, symptoms and slackening appetites. Her fourth offspring, the second son, was born a few weeks ago.

She reads the newspapers and she may even go tearing her way through a book that arouses her curiosity. Through her unquestionably magnifying eyes she sees the ever-increasing disaster of the world in terrifying proportions. She is persistent in her struggle to realise some more satisfactory way of securing a good life for her offspring than that confusion promises, she talks to her husband, she worries all the brains she has, and it may be she will wrench something worth while out of it all. She may get the idea of Eutrophy, and that is a good idea. She may grasp the fact that the fate of every child and the fate of the world are inseparable, so that no child on earth now has much of an outlook unless there is a world revolution. Harsh, clamorous and vain though she is at times, the world revolution may yet get a profit out of her energy. She is less of a resultant and more of a will than anyone else in this story.

So much for Evangeline. Mrs Humbelay, I regret to say, for I have an irrational affection for her, died very suddenly of fatty degeneration of the heart, during a London air raid in 1940. She was saying, "It doesn't stand to reason," and then she and her voice faded out altogether amidst the uproar. But then her voice always faded out. They did not realise she was dead until they perceived that her lips moved no longer.

Mrs Thump, another valiant woman, kept the standard of English dressmaking flying among the refugees of Torquay. Torquay became a city of refuge for a multitude of people who were elderly or disposed to consider themselves elderly or otherwise excused from any sort of helpful service for the duration of the struggle. But they felt it their duty to maintain a brave face towards Hitler and remain almost defiantly comfortable. And to grumble incessantly at the conduct of affairs. The more the rationing of clothes restrained them from new costumes, the more they appreciated the ability of Mrs Thump in making over and modernising the ample wardrobes they already possessed.

Doober's, having, in the words of Mr Doober, stared ruin in the face at the outset of the war, was incorporated in a billeting scheme and did reasonably well in a rough and tumble fashion. It lost its windows when University College was bombed, and subsequently annexed two adjacent houses which were standing empty. It is now a temporary residence under Schedule 9, but its grant is nearly a year in arrears.

Gawpy, however, who had seemed chained to the establishment for the rest of her life on account of her money, was a type made for war work. She was out at night on her own initiative during the 1940 raids with three thermos flasks of coffee. "They'll be wanting coffee," said Gawpy. She became the right hand woman of Lady Llewellyn Riglandon in her canteen work in the East End of London. That is to say she did most of the work and Lady Llewellyn bore the brunt of the publicity. She was always ready to stand between Gawpy and the photographers.

Mr Chamble Pewter was attached to the 'new Ministry of Reconstruction in an advisory capacity. His unfailing sense of humour, I am told, did much to restrain the extravagances of imaginative people, and promoted a natural rebuilding of the East End of London, so far as it has been rebuilt, upon traditional lines.

Nuts MacBryde was highly commended by a magistrate for working indefatigably for thirty-two hours on end extracting casualties from a row of bombed houses in Pimlico,

but afterwards got into trouble for looting salvaged bric-à-brac. Bert Bloxham was killed in Lybia and Horry Budd went down with the *Hood*.

It is possible to give these few disconnected glimpses of various personalities who have passed across the background of the *Tewler* scene, but several of those incidental individuals have proved untraceable. I do not know what became of Miss Blame, Evangeline's rival for Edward Albert's adolescent affections. But then, I never knew whence she came. She may have given up bleaching her hair and got lost in the brown. I could not pick her out of an identification parade. Molly Brown too disappears again among a swarm of other Cockney young women from whom she is indistinguishable. Miss Pooley I heard of last in the postal censorship. Mr Blake at Southsea went on getting older and bitterer like stewed tea. He was found to be hoarding two bars of gold which he ought to have relinquished to the government long ago ; he was fined, but he escaped any further penalties on account of his age and infirmity. He seems to have been killed in the raid on Portsmouth in April 1940, and his book, *Professors, so-called, and Performances*, if ever it was written, must have perished with him. . . .

These notes are in the nature of an interim report. This is how these individuals flew this way and that according to their natures, in this opening phase of an ultimate world revolution which is still only like a fire beginning to burn. They are the sparks of a whirling torch, leaving traces as they fly. The fire may blaze on or die down. All men are political animals—one cannot hammer that in too persistently—and now their fates are bound together in one. The great wheel of human fate turns, and turns more and more swiftly, either to fling off its human burthen into the void altogether, or, if that human burthen does after all develop sufficient tenacity, to carry it flaring on to a new phase of infinitely more vigorous living.

Let us take our last view of *Tewler* from the extreme outer rim of that circling wheel of destiny.

## CHAPTER 5

*And after sapiens?*

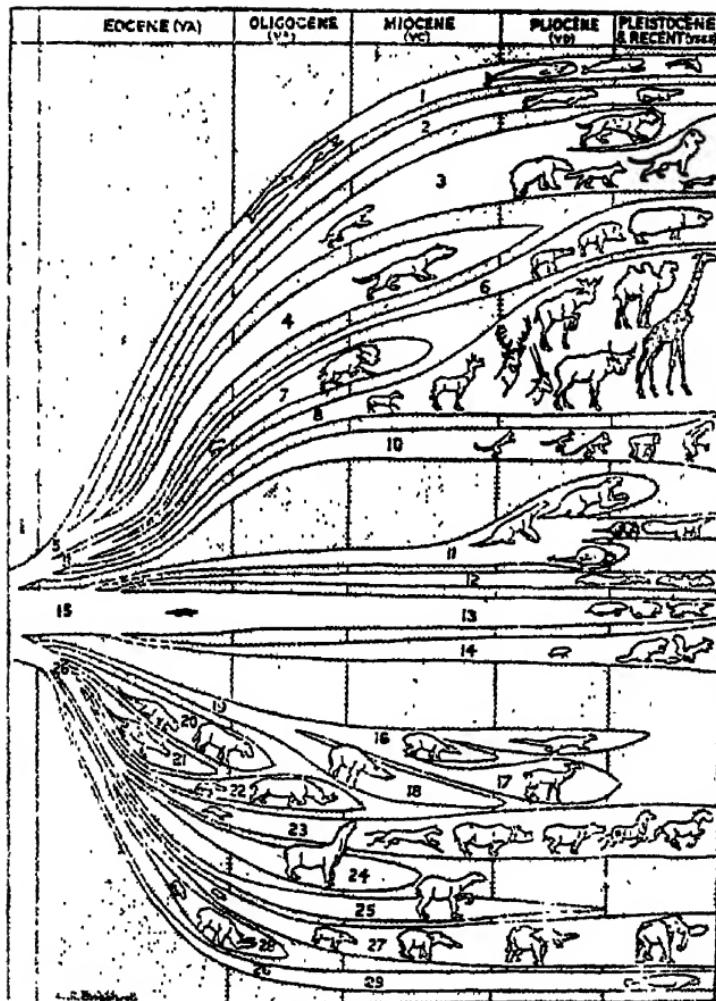
SUPPOSE, and the facts leave us quite free to suppose it, suppose that the latent *sapiens* in us succeeds in its urge to rationalise life, suppose we do satisfy our dogmatic demand for freedom, equality, universal abundance, lives of achievement, hope and co-operation throughout this still largely unexplored and undeveloped planet, and find ourselves all the better for having done so. It can be done. It may be done. Suppose it done. Surely that in itself will be good living.

"But," says that dead end; that human blight, Mr Chamble Pewter, making his point with a squeak in his voice and tears of controversial bitterness in his eyes, "What is the *good* of it? Will there be any *finality* in your success?" he asks.

None whatever, is the answer. Why should there be? Yet a vista of innumerable happy generations, an abundance of life at present inconceivable, and at the end, not extinction necessarily, not immortality, but complete uncertainty, is surely sufficient prospect for the present. We are not yet *Homo sapiens*, but when at last our intermingled and selected offspring, carrying on the life that is now in us, when they, who are indeed ourselves, our heredity of body, thought and will, reassembled and enhanced, have established their claim to that title—can we doubt that they will be facing things at present unimaginable, weighing pros and cons altogether beyond our scope? They will see far and wide in an ever-growing light while we see as in a glass darkly. Things yet unimaginable. They may be good by our current orientation of things ; they may be evil. Why should they not be in the nature of our good and much more than our good—"beyond good and evil"?

## APPENDIX

**I**N Chapter 3 of Book the Second of this monograph on Edward Albert Tewler, there is a brief statement of his position in the animal world. This diagram from *The Science of Life* gives a brief summary of the known facts of the branching of the main mammalian tree throughout the Tertiary period. It shows the various descendants, living and extinct, of the ancestral groups that began to emerge at the end of the Secondary period. It shows one branch (5) giving rise to such highly specialised forms as whales, seals, lions, and another (9) developing along the lines of pigs and cattle. Another more central strain (15) gives us bats, moles, hedge-hogs, rats, beavers, squirrels, and another main branch (26) spreads out to the horses, tapirs, on one line, the elephants on another, and the manatee on a third. Various groups already extinct, such as the giant Titanotheres (22) need not concern us now. The point to which your attention is drawn is how, very early in the story, before the separation of (5) and (9), the "Primates" took a line of their own and became lemurs, monkeys, apes and men. They are not at the top of the tree ; they are an early low-down branch. Dr Gregory's diagram, if you will now turn to it, was designed to show

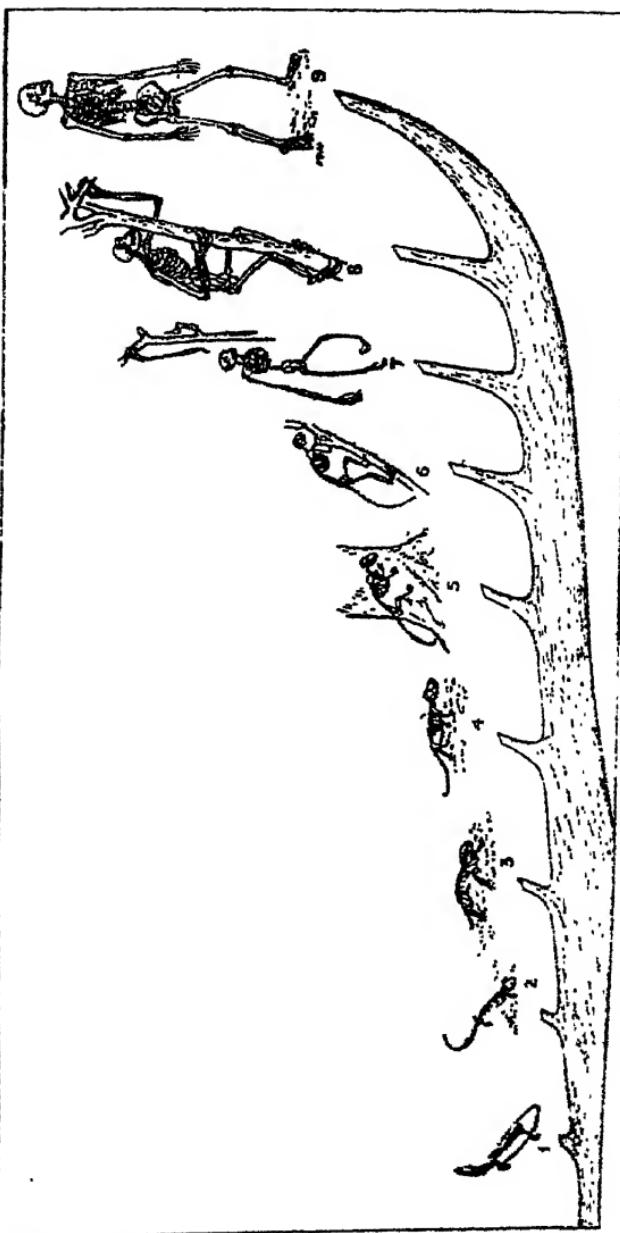


I. THE EVOLUTION OF THE PLACENTAL MAMMALS

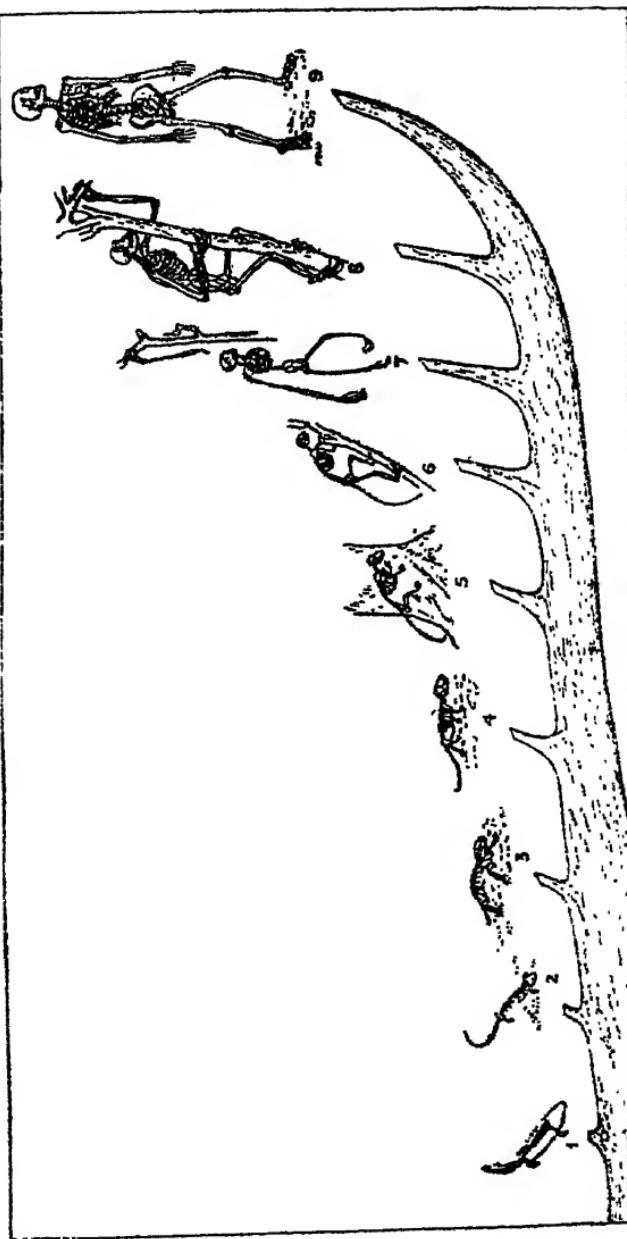
the evolution of man from the Palaeozoic age to the present, with particular reference to the liberation of his fore limbs. They become more free and versatile, while along other lines of development they are specialised and locked up in hoof or claw or paddle. (1) is a fish from the old Red Sandstone, swimming with a lobed fin, (2) is an amphibian from the swamps of the Coal Measures, (3) is an early reptile from the later Palaeozoic age, and (4) one of a curious group of reptiles from the early Mesozoic which link the reptiles with the mammals. Tree climbing began when our ancestors were still doing their best to escape the giants of the Age of Reptiles, and (5) is an opossum-like mammal. For a long period our ancestors were purely arboreal, and it is as a fugitive nocturnal forest animal (6) that the Tarsier appears. But now our ancestors begin to use their fore limbs with more confidence, they swing from bough to bough, they become as good climbers as the gibbon (7) or chimpanzee (8). The creature puts his arms and hands to many uses, comes down and walks on his feet and knuckles, and presently begins to stand erect (9). But we overrate his present rectitude, as I have suggested in Chapter 1 of Book the Third.

YOU CAN'T BE TOO CAREFUL

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II. THE ANCESTRY OF MAN



II. THE ANCESTRY OF MAN





